JESUS
FOR THE MEN OF TODAY

GEORGE HOLLEY GILBERT

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WHEN SCIENCE AIDS RELIGION

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BY

GEORGE HOLLEY GILBERT

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TO THE READER OF THIS BOOK

For the quiet fireside where the spirit moves out most easily to new points of vision and where it catches far voices of the past and the future, this book is written, not for the desk of the student who seeks the doctrines that have grown so luxuriantly around the person and the work of Jesus, or even the detailed results of modern biblical investigation. It is written for the modern man who is hospitable to all truth, whether old or new, and who is less afraid of change than of cherishing

"an ancient form
Through which the spirit breathes no more."

It is written moreover with the confident conviction that, while some things in the Gospel story which we once prized cannot bear the revealing light that has fallen upon them with increasing intensity during the past hundred years, nothing that mars the character of Jesus or lessens his power to

lead mankind to God has yet come forth out of the melting pot of scientific historical analysis.

This book would mediate between a dim and alien past and the living present, between a past that was religious but unscientific and a present that exalts science to the seat of religion, between a past that contained a Treasure capable of enriching all future ages and a present which needs that Treasure none the less because of its superior knowledge.

This book would be—if not a cup of inspiration—at least a reverent lifter of the veil from One whose unfathomable confidence both in God and in us is a steadily flowing fountain of the purest and deepest cheer. If the book fails of this, its end, the author prays the reader to forget it, but—to continue the great Quest after the springs of Jesus, for of a truth this Quest is for every man.

INTRODUCTION

THE LONG HOPE OF ISRAEL

Tracing his way along the stream of Christian life back to its humble source in Galilee, observing what that stream has wrought across the wide expanse of years, the traveller comes at length to that far-distant spring with a mingled sense of awe and mystery. This stream of life, still rising slowly as it flows, has touched with hope a third of all the millions of mankind, and makes to grow along its banks the fairest things, the things of greatest promise, that we see in all the earth. Go back along its winding course through other centuries. How has it wrought on right and left, in single souls, in states, and kingdoms? It made the men who planted what we prize in this new world; it brought the springtime in the days of Luther; it gave ideals of purity and right and strength to knight-

hood; and further back, through the rude landscape of the Middle Age, it kept a little candle burning in the cloister of the monk, it made sweet records of self-sacrifice, and gave to many struggling spirits songs in the night. Still journeying further backward by this stream of Christian life that runs from soul to soul, and moulds the manners and the thoughts of men, we see great emperors and heathen gods go down before the unarmed witnesses of Christ; we pass through fields made sacred by the blood of martyrs, and meet at last, far back, the hurrying messengers whose eyes had seen the very Master and whose ears had heard the Gospel from his lips. What zeal is theirs, what power breathes upon us in their words, what visions must their souls have seen and felt to lift them from their lowly lot and make them glorious through all coming time!

Another stream there was, less wide and clear, that rose far off in some inspired soul and flowed through many generations till it found its rest just where the stream of Christian life arose. It was the hope of

One whose rule would bring what neither king nor prophet yet had brought to Israel, a hope that varied with the varying times, now earthly grand, now mystical and high, now narrow as the land in which it rose, again majestic in its sweep, including every tongue and tribe.

Beside this stream of hope, back in the twilight of the ancient world, we take our stand, and listen for a moment to the words in which it found expression from the inmost heart of one who from his youth had longed to greet the promised day in the form foreseen by Israel's greater prophets.

Terah, ruler of a little synagogue in central Galilee, in the village of Gath Hepher, just east of Sepphoris, in the last years of Herod called the Great, said, while resting from his morning labour by a fig tree in his vineyard, "O that the Holy One—blessed be his name! would rend these silent heavens and send at last to us, his people, the Deliverer, even King Messiah!

"We have waited long, and the waves of evil and sorrow have gone over us, like the

waves of the great sea in number. Nations that fear not Jehovah have despised us; they have profaned our holy things, and filled our cup with bitterness.

"As a flock torn and scattered by jackals or by lions from the thickets of Jordan, so has Israel been torn and scattered well nigh all the years since the great prophets told our fathers of the coming Kingdom, and fell asleep. We wept long by the rivers of Babylon, far away from our homes and our ruined Temple. The Syrians and the Romans have mocked us, have trodden our sacred books in the dust, and have brought us under an iron yoke. Worst of all, we have been peeled and broken by foes who were of our own household.

"Has God forgotten us? Has the Most High cast us away from being his people because of all our sins? Yet the Pharisees in every town, with long prayers and fastings, with tithes and washings and many other rites, keep all the Law. They are holy, and the Lord must surely have regard for them, and visit us in mercy for their sakes. Righteous, too, and well-pleasing

unto him are those silent people in Sephoris and in the desert places by the river, who always go in white garments, who despise riches, and who have all things in common.

"But the many in our land are not like these, and the scribes say they are accursed. May that not be! We all are children of the covenant with Abraham, and the Lord God is full of loving kindness. Yet are we far from right, from being such a people as Jehovah seeks; and there are other sins than those the scribes are quick to charge us with.

"We keep the fasts indeed, but often are the fatherless forgot, and widows. Some among us speak the tongues of Gentiles, and read their books that take away the fear of God; and many seek for gain as beasts seek after prey at evening. We suffer the abominations of idolatry in our midst. Our priests in the holy city, not excepting Annas himself, the high priest, break bread with the uncircumcised who oppress us, and do not hope for the coming age. They lay up gold in abundance, jewels too and costly

raiment, while the poor, their brothers, toil and groan unpitied.

"O that Elijah would come, and call aloud, standing upon the mountains of Israel, and bring the great repentance! If all the people were contrite for one day, say the rabbis, the glorious deliverance of the Messiah would surely appear. But, alas! the Gentiles are poured out upon us as a flood, and the noise of the world fills our ears, and there is no prophet or open vision.

"Our land mourns, but not unto Jehovah. It cries out because the burden of suffering and disappointment is too great for it. Our young men fall here among the mountains of Galilee, the strong-hearted Zealots who think to break the Roman yoke as their fathers broke that of Syria in the days when God exalted the house of Mattathias; and yonder in Judea has not Pilate hanged our brethren upon crosses, and made the courts of the Temple red with the blood of the descendants of Jacob? The throne of David is desolate, and our people pay taxes to a stranger on a distant shore who knows not the Lord.

"My heart is sick, and my eyes must soon close without seeing the glory of the last days. But perhaps it is better with those who have gone to Sheol than with us who see our land consumed by our enemies. They sleep in peace, but they shall awake and come forth from the dust when King Messiah destroys our foes on every side, and when He makes Zion higher than all the mountains of the earth. Then shall our land be clean again, and the light of Israel be greater than the glory of David and Solomon. All nations shall gather themselves under the banner of our King, and he shall rule in the might of God over a Kingdom that shall never be destroyed. Then shall we go up to the feasts year by year, singing as we go, and none shall ever make us afraid. We shall plough these fields again with joy, and gather our harvests in peace. We shall sit under our vines and fig-trees, and shall meditate on the law of the Lord. And all Israel shall keep the law with perfect hearts in the days of Messiah. Would God that those days might come speedily!"

And Terah, sighing deeply, rose and took up his morning labour in the vineyard.

The time of Jehovah's deliverance was indeed coming on apace, but the aged ruler of the synagogue knew it not. No one in the circuit of the land knew, though some were longing for it with a great and pure longing. But no sign appeared. The way before them seemed as dark as the long way behind, and in the bosoms of most of the faithful few hope often struggled with despair.

But even in those very days, in another quiet town of Galilee, only a few miles distant from Gath Hepher, toward the Plain, there was a man, now about thirty years of age, who walked perfectly with the Lord God. Like Terah in his vineyard, this man was toiling for his daily bread and for those dependent on him; and yet, though an artisan from his youth, a worker in wood like his father before him, unknown to the leaders of his people, he was fitted for whatever high commission Jehovah had in store for King Messiah. He had heard the Voice, he knew the way of God, he had

sounded, as no other, the need of man, and had beheld, as no other, man's potential glory. He had absorbed the loftiest truths of the noblest prophets, and had looked beyond. He had grown to a spiritual stature commensurate with his unique vision. The best hope of weary generations was soon to be fulfilled in him, Jesus, son of Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth.

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CHAPTER ONE
THE HERALD

CHAPTER ONE

THE HERALD

"ELIJAH" had already come again, according to an ancient promise, but he was hidden still from men in the wild regions of the desert of Tekoa. The shadows were thickening in the deep valley below him, over the Jordan and the Salt Sea, as he sat meditating in the entrance of his rocky cave, a roll of the prophets lying at his side.

His home in Beth Zacharias beyond the highway from Jerusalem to the South Land had not seen him since his aged father and then his mother had breathed their farewell blessing, and had gone from earth strong in the hope that the day of the Lord was near. This hope, their only dower, they had passed on to the soul of their boy, where its flame, once kindled, burned with increasing might, consuming other hopes and all com-

mon ambitions. Their long wish that he might go before the promised King, to level and make straight his way, had grown in him with all his growth, and through the solitary years of thought and prayer and fellowship with the mighty spirits of Israel's past had ripened in a deep and solemn faith that he was called to be the herald of the coming age.

Most of his old neighbours in Beth Zacharias had forgotten him. A few still wondered whether some great message might not yet come from the strange youth who had disappeared long since among the silent fastnesses of the Tekoan desert. An occasional shepherd, in the spring time, when bits of verdure for his flock were found along the *wadys,* met the recluse as he sought his rude fare among the rocks, or saw him poring o'er his precious roll of ancient wisdom in the shade of some stunted oak or juniper bush. And thus a rumour of his place and ways went forth to all the country round.

The spirit of the solemn desert was near of kin to that of John; and as he looked

abroad from out his rocky cell across the wide familiar landscape, its awful hush was welcome to him. "So might the tumult of the wicked be hushed within the gathering shadows of the Judgment Day!"

The deeply cleft ridges of massive rock, one beyond another, that fell steeply down before him to the far edge of the Dead Sea, were not more impregnable than his spirit, nor more insensible to the soft allurements of pleasure.

The withering air that rushed past him up the gorge, as though it came from some profound abyss of fire, was symbol of the intolerable blasts that soon should sweep the wicked off as chaff.

A counterpart of Pharisee and scribe he saw beneath him in the mysterious sea, so fair to the eye, divinely sheltered, and lifting up a calm unruffled face to heaven, but bitter still, though ever drinking of sweet waters—bitter and strewing desolation along every shore it touched.

But yonder, where the sun still bathed the heights of Moab, and where, above those purpling earthly heights, rose, mo-

tionless and shining, other airy summits never scaled by man, he saw what yet should be for Israel, saw the exaltation that should follow present judgment, and he gazed long, all unmindful of the dread gulf beneath him.

Then voices of the past, awakened by the vision and the hour, came to him through the sacred silence with fresh, uplifting messages of trust and hope. Words of ancient promise which had often thrilled him strangely, now kindled all his soul again and more deeply.

"There shall come forth a star out of Jacob,
And a scepter shall rise out of Israel."

"Ask of me, and I will give *thee* the nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

And the sacred hope that lighted up those faces dearest to him in his boyhood became

a passion and a prayer beyond the power of speech to utter. Again he felt the farewell pressure of his father's hands as he, in glowing faith, bade him await the King's approach, not idly but as a prophet of the end. Thus rapt above himself with strong desire, his spirit open and intent, the message fell upon his inner ear: "The appointed season is fulfilled. Make haste and call the nation to repentance. Spare not; cry aloud, for the great and terrible day is at hand."

Then the young prophet bowed himself in prayer while the night gathered and the stars came out. Alone in the wide and wild desert, he was glad and strong, for the time of waiting was ended, and he had now a great and sure message for his people.

We meet him next in Achor, whose valley, through his preaching, became a door of hope. Near a great highway along which, to and from the Jordan ford, throngs of people were daily passing, he lifted up his voice as herald of the coming King.

To the eastward, in an hour, one came

to Jericho, which with its suburbs lay concealed in palms and gardens of spice; and nearer was the road to the north, to Phasaelus, Beth-shean, and the Lake of Galilee. The river Kelt was flowing with abundant water from the mountains of Gibeah and Beth-aven.

Six days had passed already since the report had gone abroad that one clad like Elijah and powerful in his words had at last appeared in Israel. The morning of the seventh day saw people more in number than before seeking the banks of the Kelt, to see and hear the young prophet. Few came except with quickened pulse and eager spirit, for the prophet's message—was it not what they had waited long to hear? Did it not mean a King of their own, yea and strong of arm to set them up on high? Did it not mean a swift release from the burden of taxes and the shame of foreign rule?

A King of their own, yes and overflowing wine-fats and wheat and figs and oil according to all their wishes! But some, whose sense of need was deeper, thought of hap-

pier ways to serve the Lord than those of scribe and Pharisee, in which they and their fathers had long and vainly sought to walk. Might not the coming age bring better ways than these, and change their painful service into one of joy?

But nearly all who came—the rich and the poor, both young and old, those who wanted bread alone, and they who craved a higher good, came onward with expectant hearts. Nor were they sent away unmoved. For though the prophet talked of judgment and called them to renounce their sins, he spoke also the word which they had come to hear, and spoke it with a tone of certainty that made their spirits leap in exultation. Their King was coming, and the day of their deliverance was at hand! They clasped each other in their arms and wept for joy.

But the straitness of the path by which alone an entrance to the Kingdom could be had—the path of penitence and of purer, kindlier living—this stirred their hearts less deeply. Yet in the awe and gladness which the tidings of the Kingdom's near approach

had brought, they were widely swayed to heed the prophet's stern rebuke and summons, and to make confession of their sins. Group after group, some small, some numbering scores, went down with John into the stream, and were baptised. The crowds grew less as night came on, but many lingered still beside the Kelt. Some cast themselves upon the ground to await the excitement of another day among the wondering multitudes, and learn perhaps how soon, and where, the King would first be seen. Some were not able to depart, so strong upon them lay the prophet's spiritual influence. He suffered these to follow him to his rude shelter in a neighbouring cliff, from which no offers of a resting place and food in Jericho could tempt him, and there he spoke to them more fully of his hope. They shared with him their bread and fish, and, late, they slept.

Like this came other days, when from the bank of Kelt or Jordan wider circles heard the startling message, and bore it swiftly to their homes. The air grew thick with rumours. Men forgot their daily tasks and

common pleasures in hearing stories of the prophet, or in talking of the future. Soon the farthest hamlets of the land were moved, as some wide forest when a summer storm draws near, and Israel looked and waited for a glorious Kingdom.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM THE CARPENTER'S BENCH

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FROM THE CARPENTER'S BENCH

THE thrill that passed from heart to heart when John proclaimed the coming of the long-expected Kingdom reached Nazareth among the sheltering hills of Galilee as Mary, widowed mother of a family of seven, sought water for the evening meal. She scarce had reached the fountain—the sole one in the village whose waters never failed—when a man came running up the road that joins the hamlet with Esdraelon, shouting as he neared the fountain, "A prophet! a prophet!"

Then Mary with the other women, six or eight together, their jars unfilled, drank in the wondrous news which made this day of early spring one long to be remembered.

The man who brought the tidings, a dweller in the town whom she had known for years, had come from Jericho, whither

he had gone some days before with skins of olive-oil for market. He there had heard of John, and then had seen him by the Jordan. So thrilled and conquered was he by what he saw and heard that he had been baptised, then leaving half his oil unsold had hastened with all speed to bear the startling message home to Nazareth. He said none knew whence John had come, or to what family in Israel he belonged, but all confessed that, when he spoke, the Spirit rested on him mightily as on Elijah in the ancient days. He told them boldly of their sins, and of the sifting that must be in all the land before Messiah could sit down upon his throne. He said the day of vengeance and reward was just at hand—the day whose light would search the inmost thoughts of men.

Now as the women heard these words, they marvelled much, believing what the man had told, and wondering what would follow. Other people soon came hurrying to the fountain, and Mary filled her jar, and started homeward. As she climbed the fountain stairs a neighbour who had heard

the story with her asked her if she thought that Jesus, her eldest son, would go down to Jordan at the prophet's call. This question had already asked itself within her heart, but had found no answer. She knew her son would do what seemed right to him, but whether this or that she could not tell. He had his own deep thoughts, not seldom strange to her in those old days.

When evening came, she watched the path across the hill toward Sepphoris, expecting Jesus, who with James and Joses, younger sons, wrought upon a storehouse for a wealthy man whose villa was an hour's walk from Nazareth. They came in sight at last, when all the evening shadows were blended into one, and, wearied by the long day's toil, approached their little home in silence. Their filial greeting was scarce spoken before Jesus, who was always quick to notice, read upon his mother's countenance that something new and wondrous had befallen. His sandals laid aside, he bathed his face and hands and feet, and then, reclining in his customary place, he looked into her eyes and waited.

Then Mary quickly told what she had heard, and where, and who had brought the news. When she had finished speaking, her youngest son, Simon, who then was but a lad of twelve, most like his father Joseph whom he never saw, besought that he might run down to the village fountain, and if the man were there, might hear him for himself. And Mary let him go.

The older sons and daughters, with wonder in their hearts and many questions on their lips, ate their barley broth, their bread and fish. What would their rabbi, Nathan, say to this strange tale? Who of the people of the town would answer to the prophet's call? What would Pilate and the Romans do? And might this man, mysteriously appearing in the desert and drawing greater crowds from day to day, be that old prophet of whose coming they had heard?

These and many other words were spoken by them, but Jesus did not speak, save now and then in answer to some question and briefly. Little of the supper did he take for one who all day long had laboured with his hands. It was not marked that he was

silent through the evening meal, for often he was silent, as one wrapt up in thought. When he arose at length, and passed into the little chamber that he shared with James and Simon, Mary did not seek to learn his purpose, but turned her to the simple household cares.

In the evening neighbours came to talk of that which now was uppermost in each man's mind; and when they asked for Jesus, his brother Joses said that he had gone apart somewhere upon the wooded hill behind the house, as not infrequently he did at night, the day's work being ended.

At dawn upon the morrow Mary did not need to ask what Jesus thought about the sudden tidings from the Jordan valley, for he was clad as on the feast days, and his face was lighted even more than it was wont to be. He asked his brothers if they would not go with him, obedient to the prophet's call, and thus make ready for the coming Kingdom, but he urged them not. He said he fully believed the work at Jordan was ordered of the Lord, the voice Elijah's, and that the coming age was nigh. When James

and Joses took their scrip and tools and started for their daily work, he gave them brotherly farewell, and said that if they wished to use his newer axe and saw instead of theirs, they might. But Simon begged to go with Jesus to the Jordan, and his mother quickly made such simple preparation for the three days' journey as she was able.

When they started forth together, she went with them to the highway, and there watched until they disappeared. But little did she think that from their visit to the Jordan there would come what came in later days of shame and pain, of bitter strife and turmoil, a broken household and a broken heart.

Alone, at twilight of the ninth day, her youngest son returned, having had company from Jericho until, on nearing Nazareth, the road turns off to Sarid and the sea. Mary asked where Jesus was, but Simon could not tell. He said his brother came with him from Jordan unto Jericho, and having there commended him to friends

about to start for Galilee, had gone he knew not whither.

And Simon told her of the prophet, how stern and grand he was, and how the people trembled as he spoke of sin and judgment; how different he was from all the scribes and Pharisees. The crowds were just as great, he said, as those about the Temple at the Passover, and more were coming every day along all the roads to Jordan.

Such was the story Simon told on reaching home, with many lesser incidents that had impressed his boyish mind. But what his mother most desired to know—where Jesus was, why he had stayed behind, what now he thought of John and of the changes soon to be—she could not learn from him.

Then days and weeks went by, and Mary, waiting for her son, her eldest child, the staff on which she leaned, thought fondly of all his radiant boyhood, thought how strong and gentle he had ever been, and how his father's care for all the household needs had been assumed and bravely borne by him since that dark summer when the father fell asleep. Her home grew lonelier as the days

went by and Jesus came not back. They who later went from Nazareth to Jordan and returned, could tell her nothing of her son. In little intervals of rest between her household cares she sat where she could watch the way, and when awake at night she started at each sudden sound about the cottage, wondering if he were come. She knew it not, yet all her anxious fear and loneliness of heart was little by the side of that strange, fearful solitude in which her son, far off from Nazareth, was buried.

CHAPTER THREE
THE CHOICE OF WAYS

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHOICE OF WAYS

THE long habit of his youth and early manhood, to withdraw from men when deeply moved and meditate in solitary places, asserted itself with sudden might when Jesus, face to face with John at Jordan, his spirit to its inmost depths exalted by the message of the prophet, perceived that God was calling him to realise the coming Kingdom. And when his youngest brother, Simon, had been entrusted to the care of friends for the return to Nazareth, he quickly fled from Jericho, and rested not till miles away in the wild middle of a naked desert. No sound of man invaded his retreat. The tumult by the Jordan, the noise of throngs along the highways, the questions of excited men, had given place to utter silence, and his soul could sink it-

self in the holy, yet dread, secret of his Messianic call.

Again and yet again, well nigh continuously by day and night, the words, "Thou art my son," which fell upon his soul by Jordan, resounded through his spirit. He knew the voice that uttered them—the same that often in the quiet hours of deepest aspiration he had heard and welcomed as his Father's with peace and joy too great for words. He knew the meaning of the message, and all his being rose in mighty questionings.

"I, a carpenter of Nazareth, the promised King! I to sit upon the holy hill of Zion, and have dominion from the river to the ends of the earth! I to build the temple of the Lord! To sit upon the throne of David! To let the oppressed of Israel go free! These hands, that all my life have toiled with axe and saw, to wield henceforth a royal sceptre, and kings to fall down before me! I to stand as an ensign of the peoples, to whom the nations shall seek!

"But thy people, O my Father, seek a King and Kingdom of this world. They

long to be exalted far above the Gentiles, and our rabbis teach us from thy word that this shall be when the Messiah comes. Thy prophet at the Jordan, the herald of the Kingdom, warns of judgment which the King will hold at his appearing. But where shall it begin? Thy sheep are scattered and perplext, blinded and torn, and know not thy love. The shepherds tend them not in wisdom. They are not meet to have Messiah come to them in judgment. First must he come in blessing, to gather the dispersed together and feed them what thou givest, to turn the fathers and the children back to thy holy way and set thy Kingdom up in all our land. But this is not the kingly sway thy people covet, the good of which they dream, and which our fathers have implored of thee so long.

"Will they give heed to me unless I raise the banner of a king and thrust the Gentiles forth? But this I cannot do. What is my father's house! I have no throne to sit upon, no sceptre for my hand, no soldiers and no gold. Yea, and I crave none of these things. What are they to thy love? Could

Israel know thee as thou art, the day of his deliverance would break at once. And shall not the Messiah reveal thy love to him? But how?"

And Jesus was unmindful of the heat of day and chill of night and of the hardness of the stony couch whereon at times, when sore exhausted by the inner struggle, he lay down. The bits of bread and fish within his scrip were scarcely touched for days, no more the honey that his eye, unseeking, saw among the rocks along his wandering way.

The dawn of day, the wild grandeur of the desert landscape, the far-off beauty of the mountain views at evening, the vision of God's glory in the stars, which had been wont to flood his soul with thoughts unspeakable, were all unheeded now. Another world lay round him, and other scenes, swift-changing, vast and awful, passed before his spirit. He moved through deserts fiercer and more lonely than that which overlooks the Jordan from the west, and felt that gulfs were yawning by his pathway far deeper and more deadly than

that which glows and shudders below the plains of Judah. But these again were hidden under pleasant scenes that floated past his spirit as in a golden haze.

The little home in Nazareth, the vines that he had set and trained, the walnut trees and fountain, and the simple, happy round of toil for daily bread, appeared to him as in a dream, then vanished. Afterward, upon the dear familiar ground where he had played in childhood, he saw a lordly palace that towered high above the village, built to stand for many generations. And this was his, a country-seat of Israel's King.

Another palace, statelier yet, arose on David's hill, within a city cleansed and glorified; and in its high resplendent hall were scenes of royal Messianic state, whereto all lands and peoples gladly sent their richest offerings. These in turn gave way to other and more welcome scenes in which the Lord's Anointed, acknowledged now of all, taught men the sacred law.

And Jesus said within his heart, "Can this be gained? Can I fulfil my people's hope of outward rank, and then, by means

of that, fulfil my own deep longing too? Alas! this cannot be. If they, when poor and wretched, subject to the Gentile power, reject the truth thy prophets have proclaimed, how shall they choose it in the glow of pride and pleasure?

"These visions came not from above: I will not look upon them more. They turn my thought from thee, who saidst, Thou art my son. They wound and blind my spirit.

"But whither shall I look? How work deliverance for thy people? Why am I bewildered thus, and lonely, hungry, helpless? Helpless! Is it surely thus with me? Is not the might of God bestowed upon his King? Will not my word turn stones to bread and make these dry ravines o'erflow with waters? Shall I then speak and test my might, and prove the vision true that came to me by Jordan? Nay, how can I doubt thy voice, my Father, or thy care? How can I cease to rest on thee and do thy bidding only, wherein I ever found my life made full? I could not listen to the sacred call that broke upon my soul beside the

river, I should not dare to think of King Messiah's work, unless the King, e'en as a little child, were still at every step to have the sure guidance of thine eye.

"Messiah's work—if not a swift ascent to power and a kingly reign, what shall it be? How ordered? Where begun?

"How fair the years behind, the quiet life my soul has lived with thee, in open vision of thy truth! O can it be that from this very soil shall grow and blossom all the sceptre that thy King may wield? And can it be that from thy love, the secret thou hast spoken to my heart, shall yet be made the shining throne of thine Anointed?

"I see thy way, my God, and make it mine."

And Jesus slept upon his rocky couch as once within the little chamber of the home in Nazareth after a long day of toil.

His people's dream was not for him. The path he chose was humble, and perchance as lonely as his desert resting place, yet it was best, the one sure path on which to lead his people forth into the promised Kingdom.

CHAPTER FOUR
FIRST NOTES OF THE GOSPEL

CHAPTER FOUR

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THE large new synagogue which Caius the centurion had built and given to Capernaum was thronged the second Sabbath after Jesus had appeared beside the lake from his sojourn in the wilderness. For he had won disciples, and his name was known in every street throughout the town. He had called the sons of Zebedee from the near shore where they were working on their fishing-nets and two other men whose boat was anchored half a furlong from the pier. And people talked of him more than of the splendid merchant caravan which passed that morning for Damascus with a band of Roman cavalry as guard.

Jesus went to morning worship with Simon, in whose house he had lodged the night before.

As Zebedee was then the ruler of the

synagogue, and sat beside the cedar chest wherein were kept the sacred rolls, he gave a sign that Jesus be led forward to his vacant seat; but he, instead of going, sent forward another who leaned upon a staff for very age, himself remaining there with those who stood.

The house, though next in size to that one which the King had lately given to his capital Tiberias, was full before the hour of worship, and out in front a crowd pressed round each door.

When Zebedee arose and sounded on the silver trumpet, all were still. It chanced a priest was there that day, and him he asked to lead the people in their worship. Consenting, he took his place before the chest, and lifting up his hands he spoke two blessings on the congregation. All then joined in the confession which they had from Moses: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah; and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Another blessing was spoken by the priest, and after that, when all had turned to face the Holy

Place on Zion, even those who stood before the synagogue as well as those within, he spoke the prayer, and all the people said Amen.

But when he prayed, as was their wont, that God would cause to flourish the promised seed of David, and would speedily exalt his horn in Israel's salvation, Zebedee the ruler of the house thought of Jesus standing there before him, and wondered if the prayer would soon be answered.

Then the seven men whom he had chosen for that service took the Law from the attendant, and read the lesson for the day, three verses each, while by the first and last a blessing too was spoken, enclosing thus the sacred word with benedictions.

Now the passage for that day when Jesus for the first time stood among the congregation was that which tells what Moses said a little time before his end—the Blessing of the tribes. The face of Jesus as he stood there by the second pillar in the eastern row —there were two rows of pillars in the building—often held the gaze of Zebedee;

and when the seventh reader read the words:

> "The eternal God is thy dwelling place,
> And underneath are the everlasting arms.
> Happy art thou, O Israel;
> Who is like unto thee, a people saved by Jehovah,
> The shield of thy help,
> And the sword of thy excellency——"

when the reader read these words, the face of Jesus glowed with peace and quiet joy.

Then the ruler called him by his name, and asked if he would speak unto the people on the sacred lesson they had heard, for men already called him "rabbi" and heeded what he said. So Jesus stepped upon the platform, and sat down; and a great silence fell upon the throng. "Blessed art thou, O Israel," he said, "for the eternal God is thy dwelling place and underneath thee are the everlasting arms. Who is like unto thee, a people saved by Jehovah."

Many things he said that morning of Jehovah and his favour which fell upon the longing hearts before him as rain upon a thirsty land. Words that took new mean-

ing on his lips and henceforth, in the memory of those who heard him, never ceased to shine and beckon as do dear faces that have vanished from the earth, were "Father," "everlasting arms," and "Kingdom," "life," and "peace." He blessed the common things, man's pain and sorrow. He blessed the hidden springs of life. He blessed the patient waiting for the Lord. And when his lips said "blessed," it was as though the ear and heart had heard the sweetest music. He spoke of God, and said that he was present with them in the synagogue and present with the friends at home, his arms beneath them, his Kingdom open to all seekers.

The old man leaning on his staff was lost in contemplation of the face of Jesus, and the peace of Heaven settled then upon his spirit. For when, a few days afterward, his children listened at his bedside to catch his latest word of benediction, they heard him murmur "Father," "everlasting arms." And so he found the Kingdom.

But not to all within the synagogue was Jesus welcome. The voice that soothed one

spirit, pierced another as a sword. For suddenly a wild and angry shriek rang through the house, leaving all breathless, fearful, horrified. Those nearest to the furious man drew back, as he sprang forward, clutching fiercely in the air before him. He tore his matted beard; he gnashed his teeth, and screamed at Jesus. No one laid hand upon him, and he had an open way to where the prophet sat. But a nameless terror seemed to hold him back, while hate ran riot in his hideously contorted face, his cries and gesturings. His raging ceased a little when his gleaming eyes encountered those of Jesus fully; and in this lull, the Master, leaning forward in his seat, with hand uplifted, speaking calmly but with unmeasured confidence, charged the demon to come forth. At this the wretched man, his face as that of one who is tormented greatly, cast himself upon the floor of stone, and gave a long despairing cry that broke the Sabbath calm through half the town. Then, as though set free from frightful dreams, he raised his head, looked timidly about,

and yielded quietly to one who drew him back among the throng.

And Jesus said again, with new meaning in his tone, "Blessed art thou, O Israel, a people saved by Jehovah." Then he arose, and with no sign from Zebedee he spoke the ancient blessing with full heart, and the meeting closed.

It was not noticed at the time, but later Zebedee remembered, that the second lesson for the day, the lesson from the prophets, was not read that morning. But it was fitting so, for now again a living prophet spoke to men.

Astonishment held all who saw his deed and heard his word. They felt that here was power, here was life, here a new kind of teaching. It seemed to some as though the mighty days of yore were come again, when there were men of vision, men to whom the spirit of the living God gave high authority, bold, heroic men.

Some ran forth to tell abroad and in their homes what they had seen and heard, some followed Jesus to the house of Simon.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WIDENING HORIZON

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SOME weeks of constant work passed by, and Jesus who had travelled far and wide through Galilee, declaring the fulfilment of the ancient promise of a heavenly Kingdom and healing men's diseases, was back again beside the lake.

The town was thronged with those who watched for his return. No one had ever seen such crowds in Galilee, people who had come from north and south and from beyond the Jordan. Men from Maon and Aroer, having heard that one was risen who had power to heal, had come a six days' journey, bringing with them on their camels those who had disease. Men from Jabesh and from Succoth in Perea; men from Carmel and Beth-shean; men from the highlands under Hermon, from Luz and Abelmaim; and men from the Syrian coast-land,

some on foot with sick folk brought on litters, some on beasts of burden, had sought the town of Jesus, clamouring for help.

The market-place no longer held the throngs, and Jesus, toward evening of the second day since his return—a day of toil from early morning on—led them forth along the lakeside, southward from the lower town, and there addressed them from the boat which James had brought him.

People came and went, some murmuring because they could not bring their sick at once to Jesus. Why should he stop to talk, they said, when he had power to heal disease? They had come a toilsome way because their need was urgent, yet did he not regard them. Others bade the murmurers hold their peace, and listen to the prophet's words.

Gradually many boats drew near, some coming from the lake to view the scene, a fisherman or two in each, some hired for the purpose and loaded to the water's edge. In one there lay a little girl, smitten with some sore disease that the doctors could not cure; and her father slowly worked his boat

among the rest, no one opposing, until at last it lay but little back of that where Jesus stood. And there he waited, watching o'er his child.

Jesus spoke as he had spoken in the synagogue at first. He called men to the Kingdom as to their goal: it was the gift of God, the place of life.

To trust the Father fully and be free from anxious care, to love each other and to work in hope—he said the Kingdom would be found by all who walked this way.

What he himself had learned of God, he earnestly desired that men should learn of him.

And as he spoke such words the shadows fell across the lake and night was coming on. Jesus blessed the multitude with lifted hands, and asked his friends to row a little space apart. But as he turned to sit—for he had stood within the boat, the better thus to reach the crowd upon the shore—he saw the little sufferer helpless on her pallet, saw the patient, trustful pleading of the father's eyes, and felt within his heart that God would grant him power to heal the

child. The boat came close alongside that in which the Master sat, he laid his hand upon the girl with words of benediction, and simply bade the father go in peace.

That evening Jesus went not back to Peter's house to rest, as he was wont to do, nor did he even go within the town. He left the boat far up the shore, and bidding his disciples repair to him at dawn, at a convenient spot upon the hill, he went away alone.

Now every house within the town was open to the strangers who were there, as they are opened in the Holy City at the feasts; but many still could find no shelter, and must lodge among the fishers' boats along the shore, or in the market-place.

With earliest glow of day the men who slept in front of Peter's house, that they might be the first to see the wonder-worker, were told that Jesus was not there, but somewhere on the hill, an hour's walk or more toward Hukkok, northward. This word was quickly passed along, and men, when they had broken bread, set out to find the Master. The sons of Zebedee were with

the first who started, taking with them bread and fish and wine for Jesus and themselves. They thought he would not come to town that day, for he had said the night before, while with them in the boat, that people trode upon each other to be healed of their diseases, yet cared but little or nothing for the word he spoke of God and life.

The streets, that day, were almost silent at the hour of morning prayer. Many shops were closed and many nets hung up, their owners making holiday at Herod's games, or gone forth with the crowd along the Hukkok road.

When Zebedee, who waited in Capernaum until the service in the synagogue was ended, reached the hill and joined the ever-growing multitude, Jesus, standing by a cliff along whose top grew oak and walnut trees, was calling those by name whom he would have with him, to help him in his work. The ruler heard him call his sons, and saw them go and take their seats a little space before him on the grass. He felt that they were worthy of the place, and since he

did not dream what lay before them of toil and persecution, he was glad the Master put their names among the twelve. He knew not all the men whom Jesus chose, but nearly all, and he was proud of Galilee, proud also of his little town beside the lake. He thought within his heart that priests and scribes and Pharisees and people of Jerusalem, the rich and mighty, were plainly not to have the first and best that the Messiah had for men, should Jesus prove to be indeed the King long-promised.

When at length the twelve were seated in a semi-circle before Jesus, he looked on them and on the throng behind, and spoke great words and wonderful through all the morning.

From where they sat the eye could travel far across the crystal lake of Galilee, and over many mountains of the homeland and Perea, a scene most rich and wide; but Jesus raised his followers' thought to higher, broader visions still, to see the beauty of the everlasting things in which the soul of man was meant to share. The past and future seemed as open to his eye, and all the

secrets of the heart, as was the lake to theirs. He made them think of that which lay beneath the surface of their lives. He taught them that the heart is greater than the Law, the synagogue and the Temple—its greatness and its glory this, that it can be like God.

He spoke to them with great authority, and said that he was come to realise the hopes of men of old and make their vision of the truth complete; that on his word each man could build what winds and floods should never overthrow; and that by those who followed him not Israel alone but all the earth should be illuminated.

The words he spoke were near to common things, and made the place with all around—the larks that sang above, the white and purple violets in the grass, the thorns and thistles on the rocks—made them what they had not been before, instinct with higher meaning, epistles of the thoughtful care and wisdom of the Father.

Yet was the Master one with those who heard: his speech and dress the same as theirs. No thunder followed what he said.

The mountains did not quake. His friends beheld no armies in the air, no heavenly sponsors of his word or guards to shield him from all foes. But when at last he spoke a blessing and was still, they were astonished more than words could measure, and thought that Abraham and Moses too were less than he.

CHAPTER SIX

WARNING VOICES

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WHEN the rulers in Jerusalem had heard from Galilee that by the words and deeds of one called Jesus a great excitement had arisen about the lake and back among the mountains, there went from time to time both priests and Pharisees, to watch him closely and report at home. They did not look for any good from one who set himself above their best and wisest, a man untaught in all the wisdom of the rabbis and sprung from Nazareth. His deeds might awe and dazzle Galilean fishermen, but would they stand the test of those who knew the Holy Law and understood the way to exorcise the demons?

One of the first of those who went to spy upon the northern prophet in his work—the scribe Hannasi, a zealous, conscientious man, who strove to keep the Law exactly—

reached Capernaum the very day that Jesus came again from wandering in the highlands of his native Galilee. The morning after, going with the crowd, he found that Jesus made his home with one called Simon in a little house of brick and wood between the market and the lake. Here, early as it was, the prophet sat and taught. The room was full, and throngs before the house were waiting, somewhat noisily, till Jesus should come out.

Hannasi reached the open door at length by pressing close to those from whom he feared defilement, the common village folk and publicans, and thence, on looking in, he saw the man of whom the land was filled with rumours. Two other scribes were there already, one of them a Pharisee, and with their help he got inside the door. He did not hear the Master many minutes undisturbed. For soon a heavy noise and voices on the roof drew every one's attention; and as a large unwieldy object swung out free above the little court, cutting off the light, some people feared the house was breaking down and crowded through the

door into the street. This left more space for those who stayed, to see what then befell.

Upon a peasant's cot let down by ropes put under near the ends and firmly held by four men on the roof there lay a man of middle age, silent and seeming helpless. When lowered to the floor, he moved his eyes from side to side, and slightly too his head, until he saw the one he sought, and then his eyes were fixed.

Hannasi and the others with him watched intently that no word or slightest motion of the so-called prophet should escape them. When Jesus spoke to him who lay upon the pallet, their worst opinion of him grew at once tenfold more black, for plainly he blasphemed. He told the man what only God might tell him, as *they* thought,—told him that his sins were pardoned. When Jesus read their thoughts upon their scowling faces, he justified his word of pardon by a gracious act of healing. The man arose, took up his pallet from the floor, and went forth to the street.

The crowd were taken by this deed of

Jesus, and said the like had not been seen in Israel; to the scribes, however, no such act, though seeming good, could hide that word of blasphemy which he had spoken. They straightway left the house in holy indignation, and Akiba, the Pharisee, most zealous of the group, set out that hour to carry word to those who ruled in Zion.

Hannasi tarried yet two Sabbaths in Capernaum, and had his thought of Jesus only more and more confirmed. He set at naught the fasts which all the people of the law held sacred, who knew and cared what ancient men had taught,—the fasts upon the second day and fifth of every week; but worst of all he set at naught the holy Sabbath day itself, which Moses had ordained for an everlasting statute. Hannasi saw the men who followed Jesus pluck heads of wheat and rub it in their hands upon the day of rest, and he forbade them not, but took from Peter's hand and ate the grain himself. But rubbing wheat to shell it is work, the scribes maintained, and one who works upon the Sabbath ought to die. And when he charged the prophet with this

wicked deed of his disciples, he was bold and answered him as though he thought the Sabbath day itself were less in worth than he, yea, less in worth than any common man. No one had ever uttered such presumptuous words and lived. Hannasi wondered that no sudden stroke of judgment fell upon him, as when the earth engulfed the froward sons of Aaron.

Again, the following Sabbath and even in the sacred synagogue, he broke the Holy Law, for one who had a withered hand he healed. There was no need, the scribes declared; this man could well have waited till the holy day was past. But Jesus healed him then and there, as though to make it plain to all that he regarded not what every scribe held sacred. It seemed to them that he was seeking to blot out what all their fathers loved and cherished. As he broke the Sabbath law, of all their laws the highest and the holiest, he surely would not stop at any other, but would try to overturn them all.

That day they formed a league against him, ten of them, Herodians and Pharisees,

men who had been sharply hostile to each other until a common peril made them one. For the Herodians held Herod for a lawful king, sprung from Jewish stock, though his mother was an Idumean, but the Pharisees spurned him as a Gentile. These men sought henceforth how they might destroy Jesus and might do it quickly. Other dangers which they saw for land and people were as naught to this new and deadly peril, they said, and for the time should be forgot. And so their plan was made to watch his words and deeds for evidence against him, to challenge his authority at every step, and warn the people not to heed his teaching on pain of bitterest penalties. They all agreed that Jesus wrought his signs with Satan's aid, to blind the minds of men to doctrines which would quench the fire of Israel's hope and make the chosen people one with all the godless nations.

In search of facts that they might use to gain their end, Hannasi left the lake, the second Sabbath being past, and travelled up to Nazareth. He found the rustic home of Jesus, saw his brothers at their lowly toil,

and questioned them about his work and teaching. They seemed not proud of him, at least the older ones, and knew but little of his deeds. Hannasi told what he had lately seen down by the lake, and how the scribes and Pharisees, the careful guardians of the Law, were deeply moved and fearful lest the judgment threatened to false prophets should yet come down on Jesus and on all his house. Perhaps this saying stirred the brothers up—and through them their mother—to seek for Jesus and to bring him back to Nazareth and a quiet life. Hannasi heard of their attempt to do this, and how they said, quite openly, they thought that Jesus was beside himself, his head turned by what had come to him at Jordan, when he met the desert preacher. He also heard that Nazareth, the very people who had known the son of Joseph from a child, who knew his parents and his family, would not listen to his claim. They held him for a carpenter and for nothing more. For when, one time, he openly declared, within their little synagogue, that he fulfilled the ancient prophecies of one on whom the Spirit

of the Lord should rest, and when he intimated that his townsmen were not worthy of him, they spurned him and his healing ministry.

These events, of which Hannasi heard, strongly confirmed his judgment of the man, and made him still more hostile to the work and claim of Jesus. He then returned to Zion, and brought before the rulers all that he had seen and heard.

They counselled daily how to break the fatal spell which Jesus by his works and words had cast on plain, unlettered men, and how to end his life. Hannasi had no doubt that Jesus was a false Messiah, and would at length be crushed, as others like him had been; and yet at times he marvelled in his spirit that Beelzebub should do so many deeds of mercy. Nor could he understand the face of Jesus, which sometimes haunted him. It did not seem to be the face of one who walked in darkness. But these thoughts, when they arose within him, were quickly overcome by facts conspicuous and damning. Jesus had blasphemed and had boldly set the Law at

naught in many other points. To spread his evil doctrines he had formed a band of twelve disciples, who daily sought to turn the multitudes away from ancient customs. Soon all godliness would be destroyed among the people, unless this peasant, strongly aided by the subtle foe of truth, could be cast down. Therefore Hannasi and the leaders of the Jewish Church, thinking this a work well pleasing unto God, sought the death of Jesus, and they did not seek it long in vain.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GALILEAN CRISIS

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THE fame of Jesus had at length been carried to the utmost bounds of Galilee. The men whom he had chosen and sent out to be swift heralds of the Kingdom, announcing its approach by word and deed, had borne their message from the lakeside to the north and west, and had returned to Capernaum, as Jesus had directed. He met them there in Peter's house, and heard the story of their work—where they by twos had been, what welcome they had found, and what men said about the coming Kingdom and its King.

Their hearts were glad, and Jesus felt their joy. He saw in them a hope of better days, and in their work a promise that his Galilee, though many of its sons were unresponsive, might yet become the basis of his Kingdom. Jerusalem, its foes and unbelief

and scorn, was far away and far beneath this radiant mount of vision which rose upon the trust and enthusiasm of his young disciples. These untaught peasants who had walked with him, these artisans and fishermen, had now begun to see what scribes and Pharisees, the wise and understanding of the earth, knew not and could not know. And Jesus felt new gladness in his mission, felt a wondrous deepening sense of power and surer confidence that he within himself possessed the Kingdom of the Father. To share that heavenly Kingdom in its strength and beauty, one needed but to bear his yoke; and some about him, though half in ignorance of the real truth at work upon them, were learning this great secret.

When night was now far spent, they wished each other peace, having first agreed upon a quiet day across the lake, secure from crowding, clamorous throngs, for this was Jesus' wish. But things fell out far other than they hoped.

The following day broke fair, and earlier than its wont the town was all astir because its famous prophet had returned. By ones

and twos, from Peter's home and Zebedee's and other points, the little band of hopeful men sought out the chosen rendezvous upon the northernmost and least frequented pier. One boat took all, and they were soon afloat, but not unnoticed. Word passed swiftly through the town that Jesus had gone up the shore, his twelve with him, and many people started off at once along the highway, keeping still the boat in eye.

As it went, the throng increased from every side—the shore was densely populated—until it grew a long and motley cavalcade. Some ran ahead, and shouted to the boat to stop, and blessed the name of Jesus. Some were borne on litters, sick who hoped for healing and who would not lose a day, yea, nor a single hour. And bands of pilgrims who had started early for Jerusalem, coming down the valley from the highlands, fell in with the procession, and lent the scene the colours of their holiday attire.

When past the entrance of the Jordan to the lake of Galilee, the boat was plainly headed for the shore within a little bay be-

low Bethsaida; and many, seeing this, ran on ahead and reached the landing place in time to welcome Jesus. The boat was drawn up on the beach, and Jesus, giving up the plan with which he left Capernaum, started for the higher ground beyond the city, eastward. There, with all the glory of the lake and shore in view below, he sat and taught and healed.

The day at last was waning, but the crowds, especially the men, stayed on, unmindful of the hour. They asked each other if the Kingdom were at hand. The signs which had been wrought upon the sick were great, they said; the prophet's chosen band had gone through Galilee, proclaiming the fulfilment of the appointed time; and yet he raised no standard. Yea, and stranger still, he said no word about a King on David's throne, no word of thrusting off the shameful Roman yoke and making Zion mistress of the earth. But ever of the heart he spoke, of trust in God, of serving one another. The stories that he told to men as well as women were not of deeds of valour on the battle-field, not tales of mighty cap-

tains who won against great odds, nor wonders in the earth and air wrought by the mysterious Prince and Hero for whom they longed; no, they were stories of lost sheep and mustard seed, of tares and leaven and nets, of beggars and Samaritans. He wanted men to follow him, and yet to stay at home, and do their work as hitherto, and pay their tax, and let the Gentiles rule. Was this because he feared to take the step they wished to see him take? Then it was theirs to act, to show him that their zeal and strength were equal to the need. His banner as Messiah once set up, all Galilee would rise and bear it on to victory. So ran the tenor of their blind enthusiasm, and the excitement grew with every minute.

The sun was now below the western mountains, and the quiet lake was all aglow from shining clouds. It was a sight to soothe the spirit, blending with the words of Jesus. But there upon the hillside a mighty passion swayed the leaders and many others in the great throng. It was no soft and peaceful scene that met the eye of

Jesus, nor was it one to make him glad at heart.

The meaning of his signs had been misread. Not him and his high message of the Father did this excited crowd desire, but only what his arm might bring of earthly place and power.

He called the twelve around him, and bade them take the boat for home; and when they begged to stay with him, for they had felt the electric current that swept the crowd, he spoke insistently, constraining them to go.

Then Jesus turned to send the multitude away, for the shadows thickened and he was weary and disappointed, but they had found a leader now, and crying, "Hail! King Messiah!" they thronged about him with many words of praise and hot appeals to Galilean patriotism. Their counsel was to take him back in triumph to Capernaum. When once he saw their loyalty, they fancied he would yield to them, accept a crown, and reign with mighty power.

So poorly did they know him! This counsel of their hearts was only evil in his

sight, a counsel long since faced and forever put beneath his feet when he was in the desert. And poorly did they gauge the strength of Jesus in thinking they could bend his will to theirs. As well attempt to turn the rushing Jordan back upon itself, or lift Mt. Hermon from its rocky base!

He waived them off in silent sorrow. When their eyes met his, and spirit measured spirit, they felt their helplessness. No man laid hand upon him, and when he sought the darkening mountain, no one followed far. Slowly, with mutterings of disappointment and of scorn, the crowd dispersed, and slowly did he climb the rocky way to solitude. Alone there, yet not alone, he thought upon the mournful crisis of the day.

These people plainly wished what he could never give, nay, *would* not for the very love he bore them; and what to him was dear beyond all price was naught to them. They turned away. And would his chosen ones be strong enough to stand alone and face an ebbing tide? The future of his Kingdom hinged on that; and so his thought

and care must be henceforth for them, to mould their cherished dream into a form more worthy of their God.

Thus meditating, as he looked below, he saw his band still on the lake—the moon was nearly full—and they were struggling against the wind, hard in upon the northern shore. He ended then his solitary vigil, and went to their relief. His earthly hope was in the little boat upon the tossing, white-capped waves.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

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A MONTH went by, and we behold a different scene. The place is still—the lower eastern shore of the Lake of Galilee across from Kedesh, two hours' walk from the Jordan. A boat is drawn upon the beach, and near it, by a clump of oleander bushes, Jesus sits with those few men whose hearts he seeks to bind unto himself with bonds so strong that they will hold through any storm.

The summer day had passed with quiet talk, as many other days since Jesus with the twelve, his public ministry in Galilee being ended, had gone across the border of the Gentiles, far northward from the Tyrian Stairs and even to the region of Sidon. In all that walk along the western sea, and later over mountain roads remote and wild, his daily thought had been to breathe his

spirit into those who journeyed with him. Serving them in little ways, knitting them together, teaching them from wayside texts how near the Father is, how merciful and kind, he sowed their minds broadcast with seed that he had garnered up through years of earnest thought and life in ever deepening fellowship with God.

And so the summer day had come and nearly gone beside the dear familiar lake. At length the sound of oars was heard, and soon a boat, approaching from the west, was dragged ashore near that of Jesus and the twelve. The men it brought were foes to Jesus, sent out to get fresh proof by which the sanhedrin might cast him down to death.

"Peace be to you," the leader said, and Jesus answered, "Peace to you." Then asked he what they sought of him. To this the leader of the band replied, "We seek a sign on which our faith may rest secure. If thou art he who comes to rule in Zion, the one our fathers hoped for, then show a sign, and leave us not in doubt."

But Jesus knew this ready plea for signs,

and knew the men who made it, zealous for the Law indeed, yet blind toward God. He saw beneath the plea, deep in the eyes of those who stood before him, a glowing fire of hate whose flame would some time smite him to the earth—he saw it, but he trembled not. "Why seek a sign," he said, "yet scorn the many signs that I have given already, the mighty works of mercy wrought among you? My God will never give the sign you seek because your hearts are turned away from him and set on evil. But yet the day will come when they who face the light with pure desire shall see a sign in my appearance like the sign of Jonah."

Having uttered this dark word, he bade his friends embark—the hour was late—and while their boat moved off the men on shore threw after Jesus many an angry threat and scornful taunt. The darkness was now settling fast upon the lake, and Jesus and his little band were hushed with solemn thoughts. They saw his way grow perilous and lone from day to day. The ardor of the North had cooled since Jesus

utterly refused to wear a crown; the bitterness of those who ruled in Judah and Jerusalem, as had been seen just now beside the lake, had grown more deep and active. Peter and the others faced the coming days with many anxious questionings and fears. They thought within themselves, "Perhaps we had done better with our nets, our figs, and olives, on our little farms, than following these old visions of a coming King who never comes, these dreams our fathers dreamed."

But Jesus knew their mood: he felt their lightest doubt. He saw all they could see or dimly feel, and more. He saw the wreckage of their dearest hopes cast up along the fearful shore of death. He saw beyond that shore a brightening sky above a new-born earth. These friends of his should walk that earth, and see that brightening sky, and gather even from that fearful shore of death the blossoms of a purer hope, a larger and a sweeter faith, than they had lost. He saw, and from the vision he distilled a tender word of comfort, courage, cheer, and suited it to each disciple's need.

Around them, close and ever closer, for the chill and fear of all their earthly night, he drew the mantle of his Father's love.

At last they came to shore in Peter's town, and parted for the night. But Jesus would not tarry here again; his work in street and synagogue, and in the wider field of Galilee, was done. And so when morning came he left the town, and with the twelve set off for Merom and the north, to be alone with them. He must disclose the fate he saw awaiting him, but not until his friends were strong enough to hear without surrender of their confidence in him.

At times the twelve had thought him the Messiah of their own long hopes, and had looked from day to day to see him manifest himself as King by some stupendous act and open proclamation. In this belief they went through Galilee, and preached and healed with power. But now, by slow degrees, as they had walked more quietly with Jesus, a change had come upon them. Their dream of earthly glory had faded somewhat, while in the foreground of their thought a mystery of suffering had arisen,

vague and indistinct and dreadful. Their hope indeed still lived within their hearts, but ere it could be realised, their Master and perhaps themselves must meet they knew not what of shame and loss. They shrank from knowing.

Jesus saw this change come over his disciples, and in it saw a ground of hope. He had not asked to see the secrets of their hearts: he had not ever in the slightest measure sought to force their confidence. His own ideal of the heavenly Kingdom he had lived out among them day by day, and waited for its charm to touch and mould their spirits and to beget in them a deathless love like that which filled his life.

He saw that Judas lagged behind the rest, that he still held unchanged his Messianic hope, and now was more confused than they by what was taking place. But yet he sought to win and hold the heart of Judas too, and carry him along at last to his own higher thought.

Thus they journeyed slowly on, now recognised and greeted, now besought to come

aside and heal, but yielding not to such requests.

The second day they came to Dan, and lodged with one whose only son had been restored to health by Jesus on his early tour through northern Galilee. Then onward past the splendid home of Philip with its heathen shrines of costly marble, and up a valley northward through the foothills of Mt. Hermon.

Resting by the wayside when the sun was highest, where a brook and shade invited, Jesus blessed their humble fare, as he was wont to do, and afterward in frank disclosure of his inmost thought he talked about the Kingdom and their common needs. He felt that they were nearer drawn to him than they had ever been, that he himself was more to them—at least to some of them —than their old hope of earthly glory, and so he led them on to face the vital question.

He asked what others thought of him and of his work; and answers various by various ones were given, but all to him were hollow, disappointing words. For some said he was John the Baptist come to life, others

Elijah, or at least some ancient prophet. Thus all, or all who spoke their thought of him, had failed to see him as he was, had failed to grasp the message that he brought. The people waited still for one to come, one greater far than Jesus, because a kingdom of this world was their desire, a Gospel of triumphant force and ease for Israel alone.

Such was the judgment of the crowd, reported by the men whose very presence here among the mountains was proof that they felt something when with Jesus which the crowd felt not. Then the Master, with a longing in his spirit deep as life itself, said to the twelve, "But *ye,* who say ye that I am?" And quick the answer came "Messiah!" Lips of one, but eyes of more than one declared it; and the wells of joy within the heart of Jesus overflowed. Mt. Hermon shouted to the highest sky "Messiah!" All the listening hills re-echoed it. The birds broke forth in wondrous song. The banners of a myriad trees were waved in exultation. Far away across the heights of Galilee and Judah fell the splendour of another and a better day, whose secret Jesus

saw within the eyes of those before him. He knew the answer was of God and felt at last a rock beneath his feet.

This loyalty to him at sacrifice of former hopes, this loyalty to one whom men on every side rejected, and on whose lonely way the hate of scribe and priest and Pharisee was casting ever thickening gloom—for this he thanked his God, in this he saw what should survive the overwhelming flood of woe now swiftly drawing near; and, firmly set on this divine and living base, he felt that he should build a Kingdom that could not be moved.

This was the day and hour when Jesus felt it safe to tell his friends the worst, and teach them how to face with him the total seeming wreck of all his toil.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DARKENING WAY

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THE DARKENING WAY

FACING ever southward with Jerusalem in view and the paschal feast, which now was drawing near, Jesus and his little band had reached the eastern slope of Tabor, and had halted for the night. They might have planned to lodge somewhere with friends, but Jesus wished to pass through Galilee as far as possible unseen. They sought therefore a sheltered spot above the road, beneath a canopy of oak, and where they had a view across Esdraelon, far and wide.

Their evening meal and food for coming days, with modest store of money, they had brought from Zebedee's and other friendly homes beside the lake where they had spent the night before. And some of the disciples still felt the sting of that rebuke which then had overtaken their proud dispute on

rank among themselves, and some were touched more deeply that the Master seemed to make no difference between his chosen few and that man, all unknown, who boldly used his name in works of mercy. These things had made the band more silent than was their wont. The thought of Jesus crossed their own confusingly and often.

Two Sabbaths now had passed since, in the highlands of the Jordan, Jesus had begun to teach the twelve about his fate, and each day's journey toward Judah made yet deeper their amazement and their fear. As children they had learned that their Messiah would abide in glory upon the throne of David. This the rabbis long had taught in Israel. Their King must live and reign through many years—hundreds or perhaps thousands—reign till all the earth save Gog in Magog on the farthest borders should own his sway and bring his people richest gifts. And then, the last and bitterest foes o'erthrown, the earth renewed by God should be the home of Israel and his King through all the coming age. Had not ancient saints and prophets looked for such a

consummation in the end? Their King should rule among his enemies; his throne should stand forever, and his Kingdom be a Kingdom everlasting. So had they read within their holy word itself; their fathers too had died in this belief.

But what is this they hear from Jesus? He must be rejected by his own and put to death! Slain, and yet Messiah! Slain, yet King forever! Who can bear such contradictions? What may be the throne of one rejected? What the royal reign of one whom men have put to death?

They reasoned thus, and brooded many an hour in silence o'er the Master's word. Amazed, bewildered, apprehensive, day by day they followed on, constrained by love and by the little gleam of light that seemed to lie beside the dreadful thought of death. They could not tell what Jesus meant by "rising from the dead," and yet the word seemed hopeful. Once, moreover, they had heard him speak of coming in the Father's glory, and this vague saying gave them comfort as they pondered sadly on the days to be. In some mysterious way, per-

haps through awful darkness, they might reach the light, and all the dear old dream of Israel's heart be realised at last. But dim and vague this gleam of hope appeared beyond the heavy shadows. Jesus read their sore confusion in their eyes and tones, and with unwearied patience strove to keep their trust and stay their minds on God.

That night on Tabor, when their meal was ended, they looked together out across the ancient battlefield where Israel had lost and won in days long past, and far beyond it saw the light go out along the western sky. The sea wind rose and murmured through the branches overhead; and, wearied, all but Jesus early fell asleep. He watched, and prayed for strength, and thought of Nazareth, which he had now left behind forever. But tender longings and regrets soon lost themselves in the deep confidence that from his darkening way a light would break at last upon the eyes of dear ones in the old familiar town, yea, and upon the eyes of many in the land who now regarded him with bitter scorn and hate, a light moreover that should spread and grow

on earth forever because it lights the holy path between the Father and his wandering children.

The morrow brought to the disciples fresh proof that their old dreams of Messianic triumph must be revised if they were still to look to Jesus as the man to change these dreams to firm realities. For, gazing back upon Gennesaret, as they reached a height from which the eye ranged far away to northward up the Jordan valley, Jesus uttered words of condemnation on those towns which, having seen his signs and heard his message, had not cared to heed it. And thus he owned the failure of his work for them, from which event his followers might infer what they had ground to hope from any work that he might do in hostile Judah.

Later, when his messengers brought word that they could find no lodging for him in the neighbouring village of Samaria, and craved his sanction to destroy the town with fire from heaven, he refused. Instead of taking vengeance on these surly foes of Israel, he turned upon his messengers with

words of sad rebuke. Was his the spirit of Elijah, to burn his foes and call the act God's judgment on them? And could the Father's Kingdom ever be built up by those who answered hate with hate? Alas, that his near friends should for an instant think that he could stoop to such a loveless deed!

Rejected thus upon the border of Samaria, Jesus and his little band went down to Jordan and journeyed thence through Gilead. And here, as he had done before in Galilee, he walked from place to place, and taught men of the Father. The note of urgency in what he said was even stronger now than in the earlier days. The yearning of his heart to touch the hidden springs in man by which the life is turned to God seemed deeper and more tender.

Spring's first touch was seen along the wayside as they came to Jabesh Gilead. Pomegranates had begun to show their scarlet buds, anemones and violets of divers hues were scattered over every sunny bank. The fields of early wheat were green and beautiful.

Two days had Jesus spent in Jabesh, and

now upon the morning of the third he sat beneath the palms outside the town, and taught a little company that gathered with the twelve. His plan to go that morning as far as Pella all the village knew; and when at last he arose and spoke a blessing on his hearers, and started with the twelve, a group of mothers timidly approached, and begged that he would lay his hands upon their little ones in prayer. His face and way and words had made them feel that he was nearer God than they. His blessing then might shield their children in the day of evil, or even make them good and great. A chance like this would surely never come to them again, and eagerly they craved the boon.

It seemed to some of Jesus' friends a thing too slight to stop their Master and themselves, and they presumed to waive the suppliants back. So little did they feel as Jesus felt, or think as Jesus thought! It had not pained him more to burn the town that turned him from its gate at night, refusing shelter, than here deny the sweet petition of these mother-hearts. No man or woman

yet had asked of him what he would give so gladly. To turn away this prayer, and let the mothers take their children home unblessed—these little ones with fresh receptive souls—would mar each word of love he ever spoke and hide from him the face of God.

And so beside the palms of Jabesh, in the fragrance of the morning, Jesus let the mothers put their children in his arms, and with deep emotion, calling each by name, he blessed them, claimed them for his Kingdom, and departed.

Then the scarlet deepened on the buds of the pomegranates, and the tide of life rose higher on the hills and in the meadows.

Jesus came that day to Pella near the Jordan, passed the following night, and in the morning purchased food by him who bore the purse, to take upon the further journey—dates and nuts, wheaten bread, and fish from Galilee.

When ready to resume their march, they saw two Pharisees approaching from the north with rapid steps, who, after friendly greeting given, said they came from Herod's

capital, Tiberias. They knew a man at court, they said, one whom the king kept near himself, with whom he counselled daily on affairs of state. This friend had spoken words which brought them thither with all haste. "The king," said they, "has heard much evil of thee, Rabbi, and seeks thy death. He will not longer harbour in his realm one whom Jerusalem is eager to destroy. He much misjudges thee, we know, believing all thy foes have said; but flee, we pray, from his domain, and save thy life. We fear his messengers may come at once, this very day: therefore, escape."

Then some of the disciples, fearing for their Master, wished that he would heed this kindly word, but wondered whither they could go for safety. But Jesus had no fear. He knew his work was not yet wholly done, and felt that yonder in Jerusalem the end must be, not here by Jordan. No force or craft of Herod could abridge the few remaining days he had in which to serve his fellow-men. And saying this he journeyed slowly down the river with the twelve, and came at night to Succoth, near

the Jabbok, where the lofty mountain wall is broken on the east. Up that defile and out upon the boundless table-land beyond the reach of Herod and the Jews it had been easy for the Lord to flee with those who loved him best; and there in some secluded spot to live and teach the things of God through many years, and gather to himself at length a multitude of followers, and reign. But such a thought, if it arose, was quickly put away—a lure of Satan, not a voice from God.

Then they journeyed on from Succoth southward, and slept where night o'ertook them, near the ford of Jordan, east from Jericho. They had no shelter save the olive branches overhead, no couches but the grass; yet straitness of this kind they well had borne, young men and hardy as they were, had not their spirits felt the chill of coming days. This lengthened out the night and made their loneliness more lonely still.

But when the morning came, and Jesus, strong and hopeful, blessed the bread, they

lifted up their heads again, and tried to think their fears were much too dark.

And here, eight days before the paschal feast, they joined the pilgrim caravan from Galilee. Loud shouts arose when it was known that Jesus was among them. For strange though Jesus seemed, and no Messiah in the eyes of most who sought the feast, his Galileans held him still a man of wondrous power, who did great honour to their name.

Jesus saw his mother and Salome, walked with them and talked of many things, while, scattered here and there along the line, the twelve found other friends and eager audience for all they had to say of Jesus. As they went on, Salome with her sons, when parted now a little space from others, asked the Master for a boon. She knew her sons were near to him—none other of the twelve as near save Peter, and him she thought less fitted than her sons to serve in highest places of the Kingdom soon to be. Hence she sought for them the seats of honour in that Kingdom, the posts of highest influence and richest gain, though she knew that Jesus

had refused a crown and did not speak of royal state. Her sons by eager looks made this request their own. Yet they had heard the Master say that he must die; that they who followed him must bear the cross and suffer persecution; yes, and that his Kingdom was within the heart. All this they knew; and yet so strong the ancient hope within their bosoms, so vague their apprehension of the Master's thought, that they could ask of him this earthly boon, and think that he would give them outward rule over their fellow-men and even over their brothers in the inner circle of the Master's chosen band!

With love and sorrow in his voice Jesus told them that along his way—a way they did not understand as yet—their feet should walk indeed; but God, not he, must give the seats of honour in the Kingdom of the future. Of this, however, let them be assured, that the highest seats should be for those who gave their lives to service in completest love. Thus he answered their request.

Passing splendid villas set in palms, the

pilgrims came to Jericho, and many people thronged the streets to see the joyous cavalcade of rustic Galileans, and notably to see the prophet Jesus, for they had heard that he was in the crowd.

That night he lodged with one of Cæsar's servants, one of those who were despised by all who held themselves for upright pious Jews. And some who saw where he had gone to lodge declared it was a shame for him to lower himself and all his friends by lodging with a renegade, a Jew who was no Jew, but worse than Gentile dogs. If he would only pay respect, they said, to what the best in Israel thought fit and right, he might have any place of power he wished.

But Jesus heeded not this murmuring. The man of whom he asked a lodging was the first, if not the only one, he saw in Jericho who really wanted him as guest. To him, therefore, he went with joy, fulfilling thus his holy work. And so it came about that he who was anointed to be the King of Kings, to have a throne more lasting far and glorious than that in Rome on

which Tiberius sat, went, a lowly pilgrim, and slept beneath the roof of one of Rome's most petty officers!

The Sabbath rest was kept by Jesus and his friends in Jericho with worship in the synagogue, and talk of what had been there in the days of yore; how Joshua had kept the feast upon those plains, and how he took the city and the land because he knew that God was with him. And Jesus said in quiet tones of perfect confidence, "God is with us also." And when he spoke of God as with them there, to give them conquests greater than their fathers ever made, albeit not by force of arms, a sense of awe filled all their hearts, and the place was holy, as the angel prince told Joshua when he bade him loose the sandals from his feet.

The Sabbath being past, the travellers resumed their march with psalms of praise and gladness. Jesus and the twelve were early on the way, among the first, and kept their place through all the long ascent. With them a company of nearer friends were joined, of whom the most were fearful what the day might bring. They wished

the Master would not go among his bitter foes. They said this to the twelve, but not to Jesus, for they dared not seek to turn him from his course.

Sometimes he strode ahead, as though in haste to reach the goal, as though Jerusalem were full of loyal friends who waited for his coming with a joyful welcome. When he saw a look of wonder and amazement on the faces of the twelve, he took them from the rest apart, and told them plainly what the end would be, as he had done before in the last weeks. But still his words were strange to them and vague. They feared indeed some dreadful hour of pain and shame might come to him they loved, but more than this they could not think the Lord's anointed would be called to meet.

They rounded Olivet toward dusk and came to Bethphage. Beyond this town a little space, where burst upon the traveller all the pride of Zion—all the hundred massive towers on her walls, all the stately marble palaces, and higher still the house of God with golden roof that shone afar—Jesus saw a festal throng ascending from the

Kedron vale. He saw the waving green, he heard the distant notes of joy, and knew at once the meaning of the scene.

These people, mainly Galileans and informed of his approach by some of the caravan who had hastened on with all speed instead of stopping with the rest in Jericho, had now come out to welcome him as King, as that great son of David who would get them liberty and ease and wide renown. Their King indeed he knew himself to be, though other than they fancied, and he at once resolved to yield him to the welcoming throng, yet in such wise that they might not mistake the kingship which he sought. He sent therefore to Bethphage for an ass that he had seen but just before. When this arrived where Jesus stood, the first of those who came with branches reached the crest, and straightway cast their outer garments on the foal which Peter held.

When Jesus mounted and set forth, the fiery Galilean leaders being in the van and then the twelve, a mighty shout of joy went up that echoed from the temple walls across the vale, and down the slope of Olivet was

still prolonged by those who had not reached the top. Many hailed him "Son of David" as he meekly rode along; some strewed his way with palms, or even in delirium of joy cast off their garments on the path before him. They fondly thought their ancient dream was soon to be fulfilled. With songs and shouts and salutations moved the long procession down the winding way.

The twelve were swept along to thoughts of earthly glory with the noisy crowd. At times the word which Jesus oft of late had spoken came to mind, and then this scene of joyful welcome grew dark from fear of coming ill. They wondered more than ever at the man who rode there silent, calm in midst of wild acclaims, his face more sad than joyous. Once those nearest saw him weeping as he went, and heard him mourn the city's unbelief and tragic fate.

Before they reached the city gate their coming had called out large crowds of men and women. A few of these were glad, and dared to shout in welcome as Jesus passed, and then fell into line behind and marched to do him honour. Many watched the

cavalcade in silence, some with scowling and contempt.

A knot of Pharisees with stoles drawn close about them, hearing Jesus hailed as "King" and "Son of David," bade him stop it. "What his right to these great titles? Why delude these noisy throngs with empty hopes?" But Jesus, staying not, replied that what they heard was right and fit. It was a time to shout "hosanna," and if men held their peace, the very stones beneath his feet would cry against them. The Pharisees, abashed and angered, sought another street and disappeared.

And now more slowly moved the cavalcade, for throngs from every quarter packed the narrow way. Along the roofs of many houses curious people stood, and watched the strange procession. Past the synagogue of Galilee and up the Temple Mount, with ever louder bursts of joy, it went, and bending round the lofty Roman tower of Antonia, it poured itself at last upon the broad and sacred court about the House of God.

Then Jesus sent the foal away, to be returned to Bethphage, when the garments

spread upon it had been given to their owners.

The outer court was thronged with men, and through the din that rose one heard with difficulty the music of the Levites within the House of God.

When they reached the terrace before the inner wall, beyond which Gentiles might not go on pain of death, they paused a little and looked down upon the multitudes surrounded by the stately marble cloisters east and west and south. High upon the cloister roof they saw the Roman sentries, observant of the scenes below, whose signal to the fortress guard would bring swift punishment to any who should break the peace. On every side they saw strange garbs from distant lands, and many Gentile proselytes mingling with the Jews.

Passing through a splendid gateway and climbing many steps, they joined the worshippers within the court of Israel.

Some were there in peasant dress like theirs, and some in costly robes, white like the priests', with broad amulets around the arm or on the brow. The lamb was burn-

ing on the lofty altar with flour and oil and wine. The high priests' offering was brought, while Levites sang the psalm that tells of Zion's beauty, whose God shall be our guide forever. Afterward, within the Holy Place, invisible to Jesus and his friends, the sacred incense was poured out upon the coals, the priests came forth before the portal, and spoke aloud, the five together, Aaron's blessing, while all the people bowed.

Then, descending through the women's court and through Nicanor's gate, the little Galilean group slowly made their way through the long cloisters. Jesus marked what men were doing, heard them ask the price of doves and sheep, and saw them changing foreign coins for shekels of the sanctuary. Then as the darkness gathered he went forth to Bethany.

CHAPTER TEN
THE PROPHET IN JERUSALEM

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THE second day at morning they who had come with Jesus were perplexed, for he had gone forth from Bethany early and alone, before the time of opening the Temple gates. Supposing he would come to morning prayer, they sought him in the inner court as soon as they gained entrance, but sought in vain. He was not there. Then through the lower court, among the gathering multitudes, they wandered, searching, until an outcry toward the Water Gate drew them and others thither. Hoarse shouts of rage and calls for help were heard above the tumult before they learned the cause. Every minute added to the press and tumult. Soon they caught the voice of Jesus, and, struggling to the front, they saw him standing there amid the wild confusion, himself serene, but with a look and

bearing of authority so high and awful that men, though hot with anger, quailed before it. They felt that he was master and would have his way.

The Roman soldiers who had hastened to the scene and had roughly broken passage through the crowd withdrew again on seeing that the matter touched not Cæsar's rights. The Temple guard commanded order, but laid not hand on Jesus, neither sought to check the headlong exit of the traders and the brokers. The cloisters were soon cleared of traffic, and any who that day would purchase sacrifices or exchange their common coins for sacred ones must do it in the neighbouring streets, or on the Mount of Olives, as in the earlier times.

The Galilean brothers still had kept together, though roughly jostled by the surging throng. Intently watching every move of Jesus, they asked each other what might follow. People near them whispered, "Who is this? At least a mighty prophet! How flashed his eye, how rang his voice above the angry din! How fearless stood he when those sons of Jabesh raised their

fists, and when the guard rushed in with glittering swords!"

All eyes were now on Jesus, who, his sudden deed accomplished, calmly turned and met the gaze of priest and Pharisee. His friends pressed up as near him as they could, and heard the elders ask him by what right he interfered with their arrangements in the Temple courts, and set himself against the scribes and sanhedrin? What heavenly sign could he produce to justify his bold, yea, lawless act? Would he destroy the peace of Israel and even the House of God itself?

Thus chiding him with bitter words, the rulers crowded threateningly around, and blindly asked a sign. In that moment it flashed upon the soul of Jesus that the place where he was standing, even the sacred Temple of his fathers, where many a soul in the past had met with God and found his peace, was doomed to ruin; but he felt that something greater lived within his spirit, and with shining face uplifted, in tones of high prophetic confidence, he uttered words about a temple yet to be and

purer worship men were soon to learn, words about a holy Kingdom of his God that he would build in coming days to take the place, yea, more than take the place, of that great sanctuary in which they stood and all its solemn rites.

Thus darkly fell his words because the very truth he saw exceeded far the thoughts of men around him. Even his own disciples did not receive and understand his saying; yet in that moment, as he stood there hushing all the tumult by his pure presence and the consciousness of power in his soul, they felt more deeply than before that he who spoke was brave and strong enough to be the Lord's anointed King.

But the scribes and high officials, the men of mark in Israel, saw in this audacious Galilean a foe whom they must crush at any hazard and must crush at once. They sought henceforth to catch him by his words, and so destroy the foolish admiration in which the people held him. They challenged his authority to speak or act as guide in sacred things in Israel, knowing well his lowly untaught life of toil far

from the famous rabbis and knowing too that he shared not the claim to reverence which rests on austere self-denial such as John's or on a blameless keeping of all ancestral statutes—the peculiar merit of the Pharisees; but Jesus met their challenge with an answer that foiled their aim completely. Had John, the people's hero and Herod's recent victim, been authorised of Heaven to do his work or not? The scribes dared not answer No, because John's fame was great; and to deny that he was sent of God might stir his devotees to deeds of violence; and they could not answer Yes, for well they knew that John had welcomed Jesus as one greater than himself.

Thus did Jesus silence, for a time, the leaders who were seeking his destruction. And yet this victory did not blind him to his deadly peril; nor did that other when he made the common coins they carried with them, whereon was Cæsar's image, proclaim that Cæsar plainly had his rights, as well as God, a word that would intensify the hate of Pharisee and Zealot. He also met the haughty Sadducees on their own

ground, and bore away the palm. They held by Moses, yet denied a future life. And Jesus with a word from Moses battered down their doctrine of despair. Said not God to Moses from the Bush, "I am the God of Abraham"? Since, then, it is not worthy of the Lord that he should call himself the God of dust or empty shadows, Abraham was living, though long dead.

But though the untaught artisan from Nazareth withstood all schemes to steal away his prestige with the throng, his clear eye saw that death was unescapable and near. The foe was on his track, fiercer than wolves in winter. The "unfaithful vine-dressers" would kill the "son" of the owner of the vineyard. Jesus saw it, yet unperturbed as when his followers awoke him in the tempest on the Lake of Galilee, he went his way, and spoke his word of warning and of doom. A fig tree full of leaves but fruitless, people bidden to a royal feast who scouted, one and all, the gracious summons —that was Israel, that in fullest sense the sacred city. Beyond the storm that soon would smite his life and smother love with

hate Jesus saw another tempest drawing on whose iron flail would beat the walls of Zion into dust and make an end of that religion which no longer knew its God. Yet here and there amid the thorns a flower blossomed at the feet of Jesus, a door was opened to him joyously, and hearts received his message from the Father.

Such a door was that of Simon in Bethany. His house was such as prosperous merchants built—a house of stone, two stories high, the court well paved with marble and having in the midst a fountain. Round its basin there were white and violet cyclamens in bloom. The rooms below, about the court, had carven doors of olive wood, and those above were closed with figured tapestry of Tyrian make. About the house were vines and figs, and one large balsam tree in front.

The feast that Simon gave to honour Jesus was at night. The court between the fountain and the dais, strewn with rugs and cushions, served as dining-hall. The guests were met by Simon in the vestibule with words of greeting, and kissed on either

cheek. They laid aside their sandals near the door, bathed and wiped their feet, a servant aiding, and then went forward past the fountain to the cushions, as their host directed.

Jesus had the place of honour on the dais, near him Simon and the twelve in order as they chanced to come, and finally the sons of Simon. None reclined till Jesus with uplifted hands had given thanks to God and asked his gracious blessing on the meal.

The feast in part was ready on the handsome rug before the guests, and part was later served by friends in Simon's house.

The host cared not for rare and costly food, and knew that modest cheer with words of love would please and honour Jesus best. And so he set forth common viands—roasted lamb and bread and olives, fresh new figs just ripened in the tropic gardens by the Sea of Salt, and wine from Magdala.

The scene within the court as they reclined was one of peace, the voices low and brotherly, and villagers about the open door looked on and listened. They talked of the

approaching feast, of days gone by in Galilee, and of the tower in Siloam that had fallen recently with heavy loss of life.

There came a hush at length as one, then others, noticed that a woman knelt behind the Master with a cruse of ointment. Silently, with lavish hand that spared no drop of all the costly perfume, she poured it on his head, and with it, through her eyes and bearing, gave the costlier and more welcome incense of a loving heart.

And soon the spacious court from end to end was full of fragrance, rich, delicious, as from banks on banks of thyme and censers of most precious myrrh. The ointment, brought by Arab merchants from the East, had been distilled from flowers that grew along the Ganges and the Indus. A cruet of the finest cost the price of three good slaves, and years of common use would not exhaust its store.

The hush that reigned during the woman's grateful act gave way, when it was done, to words of admiration from the host, with which, as one could see, some of the twelve agreed. But others wore a serious

or a troubled look, as more or less in doubt about the fitness of the deed, while one made low remarks of manifest displeasure. When some near him gave approving nods or whispers, he was bold to blame the act aloud, half rising on his elbow and turning toward the woman. "Why this loss? It had been wiser, more in keeping with our holy Law and with our Master's word, to have sold the flask and have given to the poor, to some of those who stand out there about the door in need of daily bread. A little ointment would have served the end as well—a worthy end, and with the rest one might have done much good. Now all is wasted on a moment's pleasure."

The woman turned a troubled face to Jesus, grieving that one near to him should hold her act so cheap. Jesus saw her look and understood her heart. Her deed of love had touched him deeply, and flashed upon his soul both glad and solemn thoughts. At once he silenced him who criticised the act. What he had blamed as waste was beautiful in Jesus' sight and timely too. A little while and he would

not be with them at a feast again, or where their love could minister to him in face to face exchange. A gift at parting was this gift that she had made, and beautiful because her best. To give to him as she had given was an echo of his inmost Gospel, and so loud and clear an echo that until the end of time itself it should not wholly die away.

But more than this, her act of love, unknown indeed to her, was unto him a sacrament of burial. His end was near, he knew, and such an end as well might leave no chance for any loving rites, even if friends were found who dared to ask the broken form of one condemned to the most shameful death. And Jesus with a clear presentiment of what would come received the woman's act as a sacrament of burial.

Now when he spoke these solemn words a deeper hush fell on the little band, with chilling dread of some disaster that would soon o'ertake them all.

But on the face of Judas, when he had left the others at the door of Simon's house, a heavy shadow gathered; a hot and threat-

ening glow was in his eyes. He felt that he had reached the parting of the ways. Rebuked by Jesus, and repelled from him by all he said of his approaching fate, he went away alone, and held communion with his wounded pride, his fears and unbelief.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE THICK DARKNESS

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TWO days had passed since Jesus rode in royal state across the Kedron bridge and up the Temple Mount. The third was sinking when he left the sacred court to come again no more.

Across the little valley eastward from Jerusalem Jesus paused with four disciples, while the gold and marble of the House of God were splendid in the setting sun, and with prophetic words foretold the final overthrow of this and every temple wherein the spirit of the living Father is but a name.

The twelve had parted for a little while on various errands, promising to share their evening meal in Bethany. And while the silver trumpet sounded loud the call to worship, Judas sought the court of Israel, and crossing to its limit nearest to the lodgings

of the priests waited restlessly until he saw the man he sought, a member of the daily watch before the Holy Place whom he had known for years. He asked this man to take him to the captain of the Temple, and to call some leading priests together, as he had important words for them to hear.

When a group of priests were gathered in the captain's room, among them Joseph Caiaphas himself, the son of Simon told them who he was and why he came. He said that he had hoped at first, in Galilee, that Jesus was the promised King, such signs of power were wrought by him upon the sick; but now this early hope was gone. The man had spurned his chance to rule as King a year ago beside the lake, and spurned it here again when hailed as "Son of David" by the crowds who met him on the Mount of Olives, bearing palms. No one could longer look to him for Israel's redemption. And this was rendered yet more clear by what he now had said and done against the anointed leaders of God's people.

Judas, speaking on this wise, inquired if

he could be of any slightest service to the holy priests in purging Israel's sacred soil of a transgressor. Then were they glad, for though agreed that Jesus ought to die they dared not seize him openly for fear a tumult might be raised and Rome have cause to make her rule more stringent still. They welcomed Judas as a wise and patriotic man, and said his aid should not be unrewarded. They asked where Jesus lodged, and whether he would fight if brought at last to bay. They cautioned Judas that the safest time to seize the common foe would be at night; and then with sugared words dismissed him by a private way.

With mingled feelings Judas hurried back toward Bethany as twilight turned to dark. He shuddered deeply as he passed the hoary tomb of Absalom within the Vale of Kings, where demons had been said to lodge; and then increased his pace until he neared the little village. Then he loitered, asked himself if he should stop where Jesus and the rest were staying, or go at once to Simon's, where he was to lodge. He did not care to see the face of Jesus, or meet

the eyes of his companions. But still his anger hotly burned against the man who had shamed and thwarted him, his disappointment too was great that Jesus set himself against all thoughts of earthly thrones and kingdoms, and then if he was to keep his compact with the priests he must stay within the circle of the twelve, putting on a front of trust and friendliness. So he resolved at last to meet and sup with them as had been planned.

The customary greeting when he joined the band was warmer by a shade than he was wont to give. This struck the Master's ear, and made him turn a searching gaze on Judas, which the traitor felt but did not meet.

When Philip asked him, as they went to rest, why he had come so late, he said a friend had met him at the evening sacrifice and had kept him longer than he knew.

As Jesus on the following day would send to buy the paschal lamb and other needful things and make all ready for the feast, he sent by John and Simon, passing Judas, though he bore the common purse and

wished to go. And Jesus gave no name of street or host, but spoke in signs, that Judas, whose dark secret was not hid from his clear eye, might not cross his plan to keep the great ancestral feast with his disciples. Yet when the evening came, and the supper was now well-nigh ended in the upper room, when Jesus craved an hour of holy fellowship in which to give his own a sign of all his deepest truth, a symbol binding them to him and each to each with bands that time and tide should never break, then at last he bade his faithless follower go, but not in words that others understood. He spared him this disgrace.

Then Judas rose and left the chamber, his secret unsuspected save by one. And now that secret pressed for action, and the way was clear before him. He answered not the friendly salutation spoken at the lower door by a member of the household, but hurried forth in bitter silence. He ran along the empty streets until he reached the lordly house of Joseph just above the entrance to the bridge which led across from David's Hill unto the Temple Mount.

The festal company were still reclining in the spacious hall when Judas gained admittance to the outer court and sent an urgent message to the priest. When Caiaphas had heard where Jesus was, and how he might be safely seized, he called his trusted servants hastily and gave to each a separate charge. One bore a message to Antonia, and asked that soldiers be despatched to him at once to seize a dangerous man and so prevent a riot. Others went to call the judges, seventy men from near and far, yet all within the city walls, and Joseph bade the messengers be swift and sure.

Now Judas waited in the high priest's court, a lonely man beside a tall and flaring torch. And as he sat in silence there came to him, unbidden and unwelcome, thoughts of other days, swift glimpses of the Master's face in hours when he had sought to draw the twelve to him in love and trust; and snatches of the Master's prayers that God would make his followers true and noble men, to stand unscathed in hours of hot temptation, and to scorn all base and love-

less deeds. He rose, and struggled with these memories, and sought to cast them out.

When he resumed his seat beside the tall and flaring torch, two men passed through the court, who seemed to look upon him with contempt, though they were strangers; and when they went within the hall he felt yet lonelier than before. Where should he find a friend again? How chill the place, how hard the face and tones of Caiaphas! How far away the upper chamber seemed and the fair Galilean days!

Then a voice within him whispered, "The door is open still, and the Master pardons seventy times seven. These priests will surely take his life, and blood will be upon thy head of one who never did thee aught but good." But as he thought and struggled inwardly, now stung by disappointed hope and the bitter memory of rebukes from Jesus' lips, now almost yielding to the better impulse of his heart, the soldiers came, and his good angel vanished in the shadows of the night.

The officer and Joseph talked with Judas

of the route, the line was formed, the marching order given, and he led the way. Soon he brought the priests and soldiers to the house whence he had fled an hour or two before. The door was locked, no light was seen, and all was still within. They knocked until the bolt was drawn, and though the owner said that Jesus had gone forth, they searched the house throughout. A whispered council then was held outside, and Judas, much chagrined that Jesus was not found, advised to go at once and search a garden in the Kedron vale where he was wont to rest. The priests and officer agreed with him, the soldiers formed again, and forth they went without the city gate, and having crossed the bridge turned southward through the silent night.

A garden, walled and shaded deep with ancient olive trees, lay just ahead upon the left. With cautious step and peering in among the trees by light of torch and lantern Judas and the foremost priests and soldiers entered. Then, as they went slowly forward, suddenly from out the darkness, calm and resolute, the Master stepped, and

said, "Whom seek ye?" Startled, they made answer, "Jesus." He, advancing still, responded, "I am he"; and asked why they had come with swords and clubs as though to seize a robber. Then they fell back a step, both priests and soldiers, somewhat frightened by his sudden bold appearance there at dead of night. A man whose simple word had wrought great signs upon the sick—what fire of wrath, what dreadful stroke of judgment might that word bring down upon them now!

They halted, awed and doubting, till he spoke again, requesting that his followers be not touched; but when they saw that he would not resist, emboldened, they went up and bound his hands with leathern thongs. Then back across the bridge and through the echoing streets they marched with speed until they reached the house of Annas, near the palace whence they started. There a halt was made. The soldiers, save a score for guard, returned to their dark fortress, and the helpless prisoner was brought before the priest. When Annas sought with guile to make the Master tell him what he

taught, he failed, and failing let his minions smite the face of Jesus unrebuked. Thence, guarded right and left by soldiers, marching to the high priest's palace, Jesus shortly stood before the arch-tribunal of his nation.

Gathered in that hall where, earlier in the night, the family and guests had eaten of the paschal lamb, the judges ranged in semi-circle sat, with Joseph in the centre on a higher seat. On either wing there was a scribe to count the votes. And Jesus, pale from watching and from agony of soul, his hands still tied with thongs, stood in the crescent, facing Joseph. None was there to plead his cause.

Then witnesses were brought to prove some deadly wrong in Jesus, some word against the Temple or the king, or that he claimed to be the Lord's Anointed. But the judges, eager though they were to find a ground, saw none in what the witnesses had said. So wise and pure the life of him who stood before their bar, that even lying witnesses and hostile court could find no mortal blot therein!

Then Joseph Caiaphas in extremest agitation rose, and lifting up his jewelled hand to heaven charged Jesus under oath to say if he were Christ, the King of Israel. When he had spoken thus, an awful hush fell on the sanhedrin. All eyes were fixed upon the prisoner's face, and men leaned forward in their eagerness to catch the fatal word, their muscles tense and rigid as their minds.

And Jesus, facing Joseph there before the high tribunal, knowing that his answer meant his death, and would let loose against him all the pent-up rage of cruel bigotry, replied, "I am; and ye moreover who behold me helpless here shall see me yet enthroned in glorious power."

Then the court tumultuously condemned the Son of Man to death, and angels watching from the realms of glory hid their faces from the dreadful insults which the judges heaped upon his head. At last they wearied of abuse, and left him with the guard till break of day.

But when the trumpet now had sounded and the festal sacrifice was being offered, priests and soldiers hurried Jesus west to

Pilate's palace by the Joppa gate. His sanction once secured, their work would soon be done. But Roman sense of justice blocked their envious course. They charged that Jesus made himself a king, but Pilate, seeing Jesus there in peasant dress and friendless, withal a silent man who seemed unheedful of the noisy accusations of his foes, would not entertain the charge. Then hearing that the man had come from Galilee, he thought to free himself from further care by sending him to Herod. An hour later Herod sent him back, in mockery decked out as though a king.

And silently the Master went, and silently he came again to Pilate. The calm that he had gained in prayer among the shadows of the olive trees was deep and full of strength and full of light.

Then the Roman tried to set him free. He called aloud to all the throng assembled at the place of judgment, asking them if he should pardon Jesus. They could name a man for pardon on a festal day like this, and Pilate hoped the crowd would ask for Jesus. But priestly fear controlled the mul-

titude and balked the Roman's wish. Then the prisoner disappeared within the palace, while the crowd without grew larger every minute, and the air was rent with angry noise.

A little while and Pilate came again and Jesus with him. What had come to pass within the court no secret was, but written plain upon the face and form of Jesus. Round him was a purple tunic, soiled and worn, the garment of some soldier; on his head a chaplet of acacia thorns with crimson fringe across the brow; upon his face a record full of suffering.

And Pilate hoped the sight would move the crowd to pity, but his hope was vain. The rage of priests became a wild resistless passion, and when Pilate went again within they cast aside the pious scruples which before had kept them out, and followed with insistent clamour to the court. And there at last they brought the Roman to their terms. If he is Cæsar's friend, they say, he cannot spare this man who claims to be a king; and if he spares, yea, if he

dare to spare him, their cry shall reach to Cæsar's ear.

Then Pilate's sense of righteousness was quenched by love of power, and he fell. Once more he faced the crowd without, this time to do its will, for sitting as a judge he sentenced Jesus unto death.

The morning now was far advanced—a festal morning, and the streets of the Holy City were full of colour and full of joyous life. The laughter of little children was mingled with the serious tones of grey-haired men and women. Glad salutations of old friends from far and near, meeting at this feast of feasts, were followed with devoutest wishes that God would visit Israel with deliverance as in the ancient days, in Egypt and in Babylon. So flowed the tides of life along the streets of Zion.

But suddenly upon this pleasant scene a wind sprang up from out the southern desert, the sky grew dark, and a heavy storm approached.

One passing at this hour the Damascus gate and out along the highway northward saw upon the left, against the darkening

sky, three crosses bearing human forms; and on the hill around saw groups of men and women. Nearer come, one saw a heavy hammer on the grass, and cords, and iron spikes. Four bundles lay there also, each a soldier's share of what the victims once had worn.

Rapidly the light of day went out upon the hills, and men were hushed in awe. Some looking at the central cross, whereon the Galilean prophet had been nailed, beat hard upon their breasts and groaned and ran away. One little group stood closer than the rest—the soldiers only nearer—a group of trembling women, and these unheedful of the gathering gloom around saw only how their one fond hope, whereon their very life had hung, was sinking through a mystery of pain to the deeper mystery of death.

The clouds swept lower still and grew more black. The city scarce was seen from Golgotha. Its towers were dim and ghostly shapes. The Gentile games below Siloam stopped, and people fled in terror to their homes. The vagrant dogs ran howling

round the city walls, and down the shuddering vale of Hinnom.

Within his palace Pontius Pilate heard again from walls and roof the dreadful echoes of the cry the priests had raised there in the morning, "Crucify him! crucify!" He could not shut these echoes out. He wished the priests were crucified instead of Jesus. He marvelled that the day was changed to night, and called his Grecian seer to learn what this dread sign portended.

Joseph Caiaphas was pale and troubled by his thoughts; and though he shunned the hall wherein the court had met, he could not banish from his mind the image of the prisoner.

Upon the Temple mount the guards forgot their tasks, and ran together looking at the awful sky. Some men thought of Egypt and its doom in days long past, and some of Jesus out there on the rocky hill beyond the wall.

The little group that long had stood before the cross still watched and waited in the darkness; they could not go away, though staying pierced their souls as Roman

nails had pierced the hands and feet of Jesus. Moments that were years, and hours ages long, had now at last gone by when once again the Master spoke, commending to his Father's hand his weary spirit. Then his head sank down upon his shoulder, and the friends at length became aware of the darkness on the land, and shuddered.

Toward evening, when the pall of night and tempest had been lifted from the smitten earth, tender hands took down the broken body from the cross, wrapt it up in linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb hard by the hill.

The man long-promised, best and wisest of the race, the only one who knew the Father and was in spirit wholly like him, had been crucified and buried.

The fate foreseen from Galilee had come upon him, and there were few who mourned.

The light of his short day, more precious than the radiance of sun and stars, had been quenched in pitiless and awful gloom. Was this the end? Or were his words about a

coming in the glory of the Father, which even his foes should see, a heavenly bridge for Hope to pass from Golgotha into a Golden Future?

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE TRIUMPH OF JESUS OVER DEATH

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JERUSALEM, whose streets had resounded with fierce cries as her Messiah, all unrecognised as such, was led forth with robbers to his bitter death without the walls, was still again, and the spring night wore on to Sunday morning. But Peter and his brother were hurrying back toward Galilee, not daring to be seen by those whose hate had brought their Master to the cross. The crushing failure that had come to all their cherished hopes had left them spiritless and weak, unable to cast off their fears or reason calmly of the hour's need. To fly far from the bloody, doomed city and the scenes of the last two days was now their only thought. Before the morning dawned in the deep Jordan gorge they had passed through Jericho, and had felt the pain of remembering with what hope they had so

lately come to this town, when their faces and their Master's were set toward the Holy City. How fair their old dream of an earthly Kingdom now appeared, seeing that it could never be realised! With every return of this heavy thought life grew more hopeless. But they kept on to the north, resting only in the day's greatest heat; and they were footsore and silent. Once they met a rabbi, who scowled on passing, then turned and cried that people who kept not God's law of the Sabbath were accursed. But they heeded not his condemnation. Their cup of fear and sorrow was already full. Nor did they at the moment recall the Master's liberating word about the Sabbath day, that it was made to give man rest and holy comfort.

Late in the evening, worn out in body and bowed in spirit, they dropped in the shelter of a clump of olive trees, and for a little space forgot their loneliness and woe. They knew it not, but James and John, moved by the same fears, had left Jerusalem together a little later than they, and were now sleeping in the open air a few

miles down the river. Other apostles and near friends of Jesus, overwhelmed and scattered by the fate that had befallen him, were for a time lost to each other, as young partridges when the mother has fallen a prey to the hunter or the fox.

When the fugitives reached the Lake of Galilee the following day, and came to Kerak, whose healing springs, alas, could never cure their deep hurt, an old neighbour from Capernaum who had a fishing-boat offered them passage home. He needed not to ask them whether their young Master had set up the Kingdom which so many craved. He read the failure of their hopes writ on their sad faces and bent forms, and wisely waited for their story until their hearts should prompt them to begin. The boat moreover left him little time for word or thought of things afar, and he like many another in his town had not been deeply moved by Jesus since he refused to wear an earthly crown. This action clearly proved to them that he was not the expected Hero of their nation. So in a silence seldom broken the three men passed north-

ward, toward evening, over the sparkling waters they had known and loved from childhood.

Halfway up the lake, when the scenes drew nearer which had been made memorable by deeds and words of their great Friend, the immediate past with its dark shadows began to yield to those golden days and months whose memories now came thronging back upon them tumultuously. And Peter more than Andrew was mastered by the vision of the past. His spirit ranged from point to point along the shores, whither he had gone in company with Jesus, and with every scene there came to mind great words that he had heard the Master speak, or acts of love and power that shed the very light of God upon the humble prophet.

Yonder, in the far distance, gleams for a moment the white synagogue where the demoniac was healed, and there, below, the beach-line is just visible where he, first of all, had been called from his nets to a discipleship that seemed so full of hope. A little further back, but hidden now from sight,

lay Chorazin and Bethsaida with their careless multitudes, whose worldliness had cost the Master sleepless nights. There, too, on the left, stretched the whole garden of Gennesaret, wonderful with its fountains and groves, its almost endless summer and luxuriance of plant and vine and tree. What hours and days had he passed in that paradise with one who gave to all its many charms a charm more subtle still! And there by the great white sycamore is the quiet inlet where the Master spoke from his boat to the crowds on the shore, and where, later, they would have set a crown on his head had he not sternly refused to listen to their ardent words and withdrawn to the dark hillside.

Yonder, at the foot of that high cliff, they had landed after the wild storm—he and his companions with the Master who had slept on a pillow in the stern of the boat until they awaked him with their cries; and through that dark defile behind the cliff and northward they had come down to the lake after the long and wonderful walk with him past Tyre and Sidon and through

the northern mountains. Across the lake, beyond Capernaum in the west, now in clearer view, stands the hill where the Master spoke the blessing for those who mourn and those who are persecuted. Some of those who heard his word declared that Israel had never had so great a prophet, so wise and gracious and mighty a teacher of the way of God.

Higher yet, and far away to the northward up the Jordan, towered white Hermon, and Peter, gazing on it, said within his heart, "It was there—O joyous hour! I hailed him as Messiah. And he blessed me for that word, with joy that lighted all his face beyond what we had ever seen thereon. He blessed me for it; and yet his thought of the Messiah, his thought of Israel's hope, was not as ours. He plainly said his people would reject him, and now they have fulfilled his word. They have indeed rejected him, and he is dead, our Master, slain by Gentiles. But up yonder he blessed me when I said, Thou art Messiah! Was he mistaken—he so wise, so

good, so near to God? Who then can know the truth, if he knew not?"

Peter was roused from his deep reverie by voices on the shore, and then their boat was at the pier—the very pier from which he had put out so many times with Jesus. In the friendly shade of evening, having parted from Andrew, he made his way unnoticed and alone to his near home, now empty, for all the family had gone to keep the paschal feast, and it would be two days at least before the return of the Galilean caravans.

Instinctively he sought the little room which Jesus, when in town, had counted his, and groping through the darkness to the Master's cot he lay down, glad to be alone with his thoughts.

"How strange and glorious this cottage has become since that day when first I brought home Jesus as my guest! Out there in the little court the Master healed the paralytic, let down through the roof by his friends; and there too he spoke the word that they are near and dear to him who do the will of God. From her chamber across the

court my mother came forth, restored from fever by the touch and presence of our guest. Here, under this very roof, when we had come back secretly from the north, he rebuked us for striving with one another for the honour of being first in the Kingdom which we thought was near; and he said if any one of us would be the chief, he should make himself the servant of all. And well we knew that this was his own way: he made himself our servant.

"Here at my door he stood that Sabbath evening after sunset, and touched the sick, and spoke many gracious words. How often, when he gave the blessing over meat, here in this home, our hearts were lifted up! How often and how strangely did his look and silent presence work in our hearts release from fear and care! And here we met and told him what we had done and taught, sent out by twos through Galilee. And when he heard our words, how we had cast out demons in his name, he thanked the Father for our trust, and said that he had seen the fall of Satan. How were our souls exalted in his presence that hour!

Surely, God was with him, the Spirit of the Highest was upon him as on no other prophet in all the past of Israel!"

Thus Peter lived again the days which the friendship of Jesus had made to blossom with hope and joy and holy aspiration. The power of that divine fellowship came upon him in his weariness and sorrow as a quickening breath from heaven. More and more he felt it as the hours went by. His soul was in the presence of the Master, and as of old his messages thrilled him, lifted him, and bore him on to God. Truth and the Truth-Bringer lived again. The little room was heavenly bright and still. And Peter, awake or sleeping, mastered by holy memories and unconscious of the body, saw Jesus and heard his voice. The veil was lifted. The glory of the past that surged up within his spirit—glory radiating from the Master—blended in his thought with God and with that celestial Kingdom which should be.

So the night passed, and day came again, and Peter walked the old ways along the lake, much by himself at first, yet ever con-

scious of the presence of the unseen Lord.

The incident of the Master's death was not forgotten, nor could ever be, but it was now submerged in a swelling flood of life. The greatness of the spirit of Jesus, the divineness of his love, when once the agony of disappointment at his death had wept itself out, laid hold on Peter, and on others who had known the Lord best, with a power that bore them on resistlessly into a new hope, a dauntless courage, a fine, heroic life.

And Peter kindled Andrew as they talked of what had been, and both were kindled by the touch of woman's calm devotion to One who had honoured woman as she had never been honoured in the ages past. The scattered band was reunited in the sacred consciousness of his presence who had bound them one by one unto himself while with them in the flesh.

When months had passed, and the new faith was feared and persecuted by those who held the old, the young man Saul, upon the hot Damascus road, his soul on fire to keep the Law and so win heaven, yet doubting, as Gamaliel his teacher did, whether

this strange new work might not be God's own, he, as he journeyed, saw the Lord. It was, he said, a revelation in his soul, an uncovering of Jesus there as Son of God, an inner revulsion from doubt to faith; it was, he said again, a heavenly vision, but as real as his own being, and wholly like that which the earlier disciples had seen. It flashed upon him from the inner world, as his spirit, seeking truth, was torn between doubt and duty.

This Christ of his vision, unknown of him at first, unscarred by death and glorious as the sun, was not a presence to walk familiarly with men, as once the Master walked; he was supernal, "the man from heaven," clothed in heavenly light, the ideal King of Israel, as Paul had long imagined him to be.

Paul was not Peter, nor were their visions one. Each saw according to his past. But underneath their great experiences, wherein, as ever in man's deeper life, were things that were not understood, there ran the vital current of a clear and joyous certainty that he whom men had crucified was living,

regnant, immortal; and with that confidence there arose in might the faith that their own life would stand the shock of death.

This was the triumph of Jesus. Across the wide mysterious gulf of death his power held the men whom he had won. They felt his presence, saw him, knew him, and were strong. The reality of life beyond the grave, the sense of sharing God's eternal day, broke at last upon the world. It broke, and lo, beneath it, the ground from which the conviction of this reality sprang, was not some theory of immortal being, more clever and strong than men, urged by profoundest longings, had ever forged in earlier times, but it was an experience, a life, a personality, a spirit so pure and mighty that one who had felt its power knew henceforth that it lived with the very life of God. This was the grounding of the great Easter faith, the basis clear and indestructible of the conviction that the Master was the Master still, seated at the right hand of the throne of power, the forerunner within the

veil of a countless host who should choose his way.

The final triumph of Jesus in the days of the great disappointment and the great recovery was thus the triumph of life, of days of toil and nights of prayerful meditation, of deeds and looks of love, of unwearied patience with the dull of heart, of unbroken loyalty to highest truth seen as we see the sun in a clear sky, yes, and of tears for those whom love could not soften and of the long agony on the Roman cross; a triumph won in humble Nazareth and in the thronged streets of Capernaum, among the boats by the beautiful lake and the palms of Gennesaret, in many an unnamed town hidden in the hills and mountains of Galilee, in Bethsaida and Jericho, in the land across the Jordan, in Bethany and Jerusalem. Against this vivid and divinely persuasive background of reality one and another child of the Christian dawn saw, in deep religious ecstasy or in dreams when dreams were potent, a speaking vision of the Master; but to the many disciples then and through the brightening ages since, no such vision has

been given. But it does not matter. There is conviction in the soul which enters into fellowship with Jesus through the gateway of his deeds and words, a conviction that he lives. This is enough and will be till the end. For while the soul of man responds to love and aspires to God, it will see deathless Hope beckoning it onward by the light of that triumphant Life which, having once mirrored the eternal Spirit of the Father to the uttermost of his love, must be vital and redeeming throughout all ages.

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Jesus for the men of today

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